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# **ESSAYS AND STUDIES**



# ESSAYS AND STUDIES

BY MEMBERS OF

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## MATTHEW ARNOLD

AT Oxford Arnold was gay, ardent, a dandy, full of facility and self-assurance. He appeared to behave much as the young Oscar Wilde may have done later: with a Jove-like wave of the hand he pronounced or overruled, laughed too much and ventured on preposterous practical jokes, till even the sister<sup>1</sup> most in his confidence was surprised to find so much 'moral profundity' in *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems*. The youth was impulsive and intrepid who not only wrote but printed

Ere the parting kiss be dry<sup>2</sup>

and followed the great tragedienne Rachel from Edinburgh to Paris and during two months never missed a single performance.<sup>3</sup>

To-day Dr. Arnold's mythical shadow distorted by Lytton Strachey disparages all that spring sunshine. Young Matthew mixed easily with both social superiors and inferiors, and something of that buoyant presumption and affability remained with him through life and puzzled readers who thought him never more than half-serious and resented his laughing at opinions and persons they respected. This perplexity is perhaps shared by the editor of his letters to Clough, who enumerating 'foolish things'<sup>4</sup> that Arnold said, includes his estimates of French poetry, of Keats, of Shelley, of the Celts, of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and his waste of time begging the British Philistine to become urbane and civilized, in which surely misunderstanding is the main ingredient.

For Arnold, not only truth but its opportunity was important: the *Zeitgeist* must be humoured; to oppose the stream of opinion might be fatuous, one must take advantage of its

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 24-6 *Letters to Clough* (O.U. Press, 1932).

<sup>2</sup> *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems*, p. 59 (1849 ?).

<sup>3</sup> *Irish Essays: The French Play in London*.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 52.

strength so as to direct it; with a like wisdom he tells his sister<sup>1</sup> that, being more naturally worldly than the rest of the family, he feels a growing estrangement from them, for believing that every creature must strive to fulfil the law of its being, he had traced the central strands among his impulses and wished to discipline his life in conformity to them and not waste energy in following those less likely to recur.<sup>2</sup> Interest in actuality he judged to be for him a necessary and central strand. At Ketners, towards the end of his life, he answered a remorseful sigh towards mountain freedom—‘My dear Morley, think, Wordsworth at Rydal lived the life of a farmer, how much more worthy creatures of a wide discourse is our life here; how much more intelligence, how much more elasticity of temper, how much finer a palate the day requires of us.’<sup>3</sup>

To-day’s estimate of French art and poetry is no more likely to prove final than that which Arnold shared with his day and which Swinburne opposed. Estimates of contemporaries and still more of foreign contemporaries are bound to need correction, and Arnold doubted whether it was not waste of time to study one’s contemporaries;<sup>4</sup> he was praised by Sainte-Beuve for knowing the French classics as few foreigners do. He owned that he knew nothing about Celtic literature while he was lecturing on it, yet felt that he succeeded in saying something that could be received and was helpful. He resorted to the best authorities for facts; to relate these to current difficulties he relied on his flair, and the progress made since owes him a considerable debt for an interpretation which though partial was forwarding.

The points about the deceased wife’s sister and the Philistine’s need for urbanity illustrate his fundamental ‘Freedom,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. i, p. 14 (Macmillan, 1895).

<sup>2</sup> Yet he remained the most faithful brother and son, and Mrs. Forster, who received this confession, was later told that she, not even excepting Clough, was the reader from whom he received most. (*Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold*, edited by Arnold Whitridge, pp. 21, 25.) See also *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. i, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Source unknown.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 154.

yes! but for what? <sup>1</sup> The Liberals he thought set the political machine in motion over trifling and disputable issues because they could not face the real demand of those days. They did what was easiest because they lacked courage and knowledge for advancing life and education; thus they tinkered and failed.

His muse was more hampered than Browning's, Tennyson's, Swinburne's, or even Rossetti's, for not only did he, like this last, have to earn his living by other means than writing verse, but he was caught up into the machinery of administration and became a school-inspector exemplary, correcting papers, travelling about, taking notes, making reports, interviewing important persons. His first volumes of poetry passed all but unnoticed, though all three contained poems which every one now ranks with or above Tennyson's best. This stupid reception showed him that the age was not ripe for the poetry he wanted to write, and for more easily applauded kinds he felt prevented by the largeness and clearness of his mind, so left them to others. Thus his poetry became a leisure-hour and holiday hobby. If it is comparable with Wordsworth's and that of the poets named above, then we must conclude that in more propitious circumstances it might have risen higher, or else that full command of his time is not necessarily advantageous to a poet. True, his prose might have kept him alive, but he was forced to accept a function partly by marrying the daughter of a judge whose due was more than a minimum of comfort. The state may be held to have made no sagacious use of his capabilities. Yet even under socialism we may doubt whether the fitness of a public servant will be considered apart from the degree in which he fulfils a given task. We do not easily imagine a Minister of Education saying to himself, 'It is my duty to resign in favour of one of my subordinates.' But what a happy country will that be in which such a man rises to the top! He condoned conventional assumptions to some extent in spite of being disquieted by

The armies of the homeless and unfed<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, ch. II, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetical Works: To a Republican Friend*, p. 7 (Macmillan, 1896).

because the power of one 'seeming sole to awake'<sup>1</sup> was inadequate :

The wide earth is still  
Wider than one man's passion: there's no mood,  
No meditation, no delight, no sorrow,  
Cased in one man's dimensions, can distil  
Such pregnant and infectious quality  
Six yards round shall not ring it,<sup>2</sup>

and gave his energy to preparing a future in which more truth and justice than those assumptions allowed for would be possible. He renounced writing a prose addressed to his equals in order to teach. Guided by the examples of Socrates and Jesus, he dedicated himself to the help of those who did not share his advantages. Hence his continual repetitions, which irritated his self-constituted intellectual peers, but helped the half-educated to catch hold of ideas with which they could only slowly grow familiar. Even to-day, after all that has been achieved by Wilde, Shaw, Wells, Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, it is not 'the considerate temper' and 'pliancy of spirit' which the nation has achieved that Conservatives wish to maintain and Socialists aim at raising! No, a firm hold on property and advantage is what reactionaries are most anxious about, while a better distribution of them seems the most fundamental reform to progressives. He could to-day mock

The fools in present power  
Doomed, pompous and absurd<sup>3</sup>

as he derided Disraeli, Gladstone, and John Bright.

It has been said that he was 'ineffectual', but was not that world with its waste of power and opportunity still more 'ineffectual'? And now that waste and destruction have grown to colossal proportions, vital assurance that the human values of kindness, beauty, and truth should take precedence of all other interests still seems the world's greatest deficit. Such assurance Arnold saw was the essence of religion and

<sup>1</sup> *In Utrumque Paratus: Poetical Works*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Poems*, 1853: *Consolation*.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetical Works: An Horatian Echo*, p. 47.

the instinctive need of art and literature. His advocacy pleads for practice, never for theory. He thought an example far more precious than deductions as to its precedent or future implications; Homer, Jesus, Falkland, or Turgot were far more explicit of excellence, than the perspective of suppositions, that might join them to an origin before change or doubt came into being, or to any preconceived utopia.

His criticism of theology was entirely misunderstood by F. H. Bradley, an expert philosopher applied to logical issues, on which it seems now agreed by his successors that he failed to establish the results he proclaimed. His mistake will serve as an example to many similar ones in other fields, and has been espoused by T. S. Eliot.

Arnold had shown how God might be regarded as a name for a vast and indeterminate experience concerning a 'not-ourselves' which helps us to do right, and keep clean, so as to promote inward happiness.

The notion of our definition does, in fact, enter into the term God in men's common use of it. To please God, to serve God, to obey God's will, mean to follow a law of things which is found in conscience and which is an indication, irrespective of our arbitrary wish and fancy, of what we ought to do. There is then a real power which makes for righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

And he said to sceptic and materialist: 'How does this happen if there is "no divinity which shapes our end"?'

But Bradley mocked:

'Is there a God?' asks the reader. 'Oh yes,' replies Mr. Arnold, 'and I can verify Him in experience.' 'And what is He then,' cries the reader. 'Be virtuous, and as a rule you will be happy,' is the answer. 'Well, and God?' 'That is God,' says Mr. Arnold, 'there is no deception and what more do you want?' etc.<sup>2</sup>

Now place the phrase 'Be virtuous and as a rule you will be happy' beside this:

And never certainly was the joy, which in self-renouncement underlies the pain, so brought out as when Jesus boldly called

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ethical Studies*, p. 284.

the suppression of our first impulses and current thoughts: *life, real life, eternal life*. So that Jesus not only saw this great necessary truth of there being, as Aristotle says, in human nature a part to rule and a part to be ruled; he saw it so thoroughly, that he saw through the suffering at its surface to the joy at its centre, filled it with promise and hope and made it infinitely attractive . . . though others have seen that it was necessary, Jesus above everyone, saw that it was peace, joy, life.<sup>1</sup>

Evidently Bradley had either not read or been so blind with scorn that he could not understand. His quotations are all from the *Quarterly Review*, not from the book, and thus refer to a single chapter.

Again Arnold had said that his words 'for science, God is simply *the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being*', may be allowed and prove useful. But Bradley simply ignored Arnold's insistence that such language was both inadequate and improper and could, only for a time, help a section of humanity whom alone he hoped to persuade when writing *Literature and Dogma*, a section which certainly did not include Bradley, and does not include Mr. T. S. Eliot. The terms used were such as science then used, and expressed a far more limited object than preoccupied 'the religious consciousness'.<sup>2</sup>

The language of the Bible, like that of poetry, was, he said, proper and adequate as eloquence but not as science, not as logic. Therefore to replace Biblical adequacy by scientific inadequacy might help those whom science had dismayed, to detect the minor meaning in the major, the part in the whole. Why not face a man's real position? Why invent an attitude for him which he has never assumed? Is this what Mr. Eliot calls 'fun and banter'?<sup>3</sup> Arnold's 'banter' helped those who had felt 'out of it', to consider bishops and metaphysicians as merely mortal men like themselves; but to those tremendous claimants themselves, it could but appear impertinent levity, ignoring their arguments or countering

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, pp. 208-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 41, 42 (or 27-31 in second edition).

<sup>3</sup> *For Lancelot Andrews*, p. 71.



them with unrelated considerations. But he had never imagined them as possible readers of a book so strictly addressed to less important people.<sup>1</sup>

Now Arnold was not arguing even with those whom he addressed. He did not seek to prove truths to them but to persuade them to make a practical experiment.<sup>2</sup> 'Follow Jesus, He is not as you suppose either non-human or all too-human, but may be viewed merely as he who carried through the experiment of self-renouncement most engagingly and with a unique success.' He provided them with rules of thumb with which to deal with the traditional sayings of Jesus. Though learned exegesis has drawn nearer to his attitude, it has by no means yet caught him up. His genius for poetry and great sagacity in dealing with literature enabled him to dissolve difficulties which ingenious deductions from obviously insufficient data too often rendered preposterous. In the fluid language of the Biblical writers, terms were undefined:

God's wisdom and God's goodness!—Ay, but fools  
Mis-define these till God knows them no more.  
Wisdom and goodness, they are God!<sup>3</sup>

In fact Arnold's and Bradley's views were as like as two peas; for both faith was loyalty to the higher and real self by the abnegation of the lower and apparent self. They differed only in addressing diverse audiences. Bradley addressed his equals in abstruse reasoning; Arnold, in imitation of Jesus, addressed only plain men who felt at a loss. The philosopher's criticism of the literary man,<sup>4</sup> far from being, as Mr. Eliot exclaims, 'final' and 'a great triumph of wit' turning a 'man's methods, almost his tricks of speech against himself . . .', shows not even a fair mind, and consists entirely of tricks of speechaped in ridicule, without any attempt to face their meaning. Bradley had been too irritated by the jibes

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*: Introduction, pp. 7 and 8.

<sup>2</sup> See also *Poetical Works: The Better Part*, p. 182, for Arnold's personal opinion. *Literature and Dogma*, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetical Works: The Divinity*, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *For Lancelot Andrews*, p. 79.

against metaphysicians to inquire what their aim and purport was.

Mr. Eliot says: 'The distinction is clearly drawn, by Bradley, between Man's mere will and the will of the divine' and that the process of giving up your will and putting your whole self . . . 'into the will of the divine is a process Arnold could not accept.' These words might on the contrary have been Arnold's, whose whole effort was to lead his readers from self-discipline which most recognize as necessary on and up to 'the secret of Jesus' entire self-renouncement and union with the divine'.<sup>1</sup> If there is a 'will of God', as Mr. Eliot allows that 'Arnold in a hasty moment admits, then some doctrine of Grace must be admitted too'. Why! that the very constitution of things favoured those who died to their current thoughts and first impulses in order to live in imitation of Jesus, the reality of this grace was the essence of Arnold's doctrine! Nobody could read the chapters *Religion New Given* and the *Testimony of Jesus to Himself* and retain any doubt on this subject.<sup>2</sup> But probably neither Bradley nor Mr. Eliot thought it necessary to read them.

Perhaps Arnold might have pursed his lips over the phrase 'The distinction is clearly drawn between man's mere will and the will of the divine', since distinctions clearly drawn between indefinables savour of philosophical clap-trap, but more probably he would merely have translated inadequate prose into verse:

He only lives with the world's life  
Who has renounced his own.<sup>3</sup>

For as Bradley confesses, 'The whole of Nature must in some sense be included, and itself will the Divine, e.g. "My brother the sun"',<sup>4</sup> like Arnold approving poetical language, though he asserts it to be logically justified, not merely appropriate to our ignorance.

I myself do not possess the logician's technique, yet I know

<sup>1</sup> *For Lancelot Andrews*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, chs. III and VII.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetical Works*, Obermann, p. 329.

<sup>4</sup> *Ethical Studies*.

that those reputed to be masters of it, Dr. G. E. Moore<sup>1</sup> and Bertrand Russell,<sup>2</sup> hold that Bradley failed in his argument about the essence of reality. They may be wrong, but at any rate his success is not yet evident, and even Mr. Eliot admits that his ideas have gone out of fashion. Arnold realized that no one knew what *being* essentially implied and that there was little probability of any one coming to know; whereas Bradley, in spite of some genuine modesty, believed he had grasped such knowledge sufficiently to draw clear distinctions between what was real and what only appeared to be so.

Arnold thought such defences of religion both insecure and impractical; and so himself held fast to the experimental method, 'by their fruits ye shall know them'. He refused either to dogmatize or to speculate, and left the future to such hopes as arise in sincere and patient seekers after good. The real clash came because Bradley thought he knew, whereas Arnold realized that both were ignorant and could only apprehend that by which they were apprehended tentatively with a constant liability to error. The crux is:

Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends

Whose means are pure and spotless as his ends.

Events do not immediately prove that this is so, for the crucified just man and all martyrs were not defended from most cruel fates. Only in the immaterial world of influence their influence was defended and perpetuated; for the spirit witnesses with our spirit and thus they triumph. And yet those who win inward serenity by subservience to perfection are advantaged even in this life and gain more than they lay down, find more than they lose. Popular religion uses images to express both these apparently conflicting perceptions, but too often idolizes those images as statements of fact, just as Bradley thought his statements equivalents of what he intended to express, but for Arnold such things could best be conveyed by poetry, not by logic.

I incline to think that Arnold's generalized terms tend a little to woodenness. Like Bradley, he speaks of conscience

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Studies*, pp. 198-219.

<sup>2</sup> *Sceptical Essays*, pp. 56-7.

as one and the same power in all individuals, whereas we see that it has evolved very gradually, and to-day primitive or antiquated forms survive alongside with specimens which may claim to be more up to date. Every conscience differs both in strength and enlightenment and one cannot be substituted for another. A man can only follow the conscience he has, not some one else's: still the habit of being overruled by it will strengthen it, and the results thus obtained may enlighten it if he studies them. Yet this view is often implicit in Arnold's words, as when he says: 'it is not enough to follow conscience but necessary to ensure that it tells you right'.

Arnold prophetically foresaw the disintegration of religion and, as a consequence, of civilization; this has proceeded so far since his death that to-day nearly every thoughtful man feels queasy about it. He discerned two classes as the chief dissolvents: the orthodox who cling savagely to tradition, and those who 'care for none of these things'. The first really agree with Mr. T. S. Eliot, who celebrated his conversion to Anglicanism by writing<sup>1</sup> 'The spirit killeth but the letter giveth light' in contradiction of St. Paul; the second, who do the best for themselves without troubling about others, are those 'whom martyrs called the world'.<sup>2</sup> Between, there remain those who will not grant the team spirit any virtue except as a means to a near and definite good.

What schools

Have yet so much as heard this simpler lore?

This no Saint preaches, and this no Church rules;

'Tis in the desert, now and heretofore.<sup>3</sup>

Study of Greek philosophy and of the *Gita* had brought him up against the incomprehensibility of appearances and man's overweening assertions about the unknown. If such assertions could ever be proved, the process would certainly be too difficult and take too long to be of use to his contemporaries. Therefore he preferred to deal with the ignorance, hope, faith, and doubt which were actually moving them.

<sup>1</sup> *For Lancelot Andrews*, p. 89, note.

<sup>2</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Adam's Curse*.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetical Works. The Divinity*, p. 183.

He did not deny the immensity of obscurity, he thought it well that those specially gifted for penetrating it should devote themselves to that task, but he himself, while casting doubt on too confident assumptions, as Socrates did, assumed a filial attitude to perfection in imitation of Jesus. All great masterpieces and supreme legendary figures are ultimates that we can neither analyse nor experiment with. They may be viewed as man's farthest reach in this or that direction or at this or that epoch; behind them is what? God? the spirit? goodness, beauty and truth? these are names for conceptions that we cannot fully grasp.

Arnold's agnosticism might be called 'white' in the phrase of Llewellyn Jones (the American critic) which supposes that we all know an agnosticism darkened with despondency. The 'white' says 'I don't know' to the assertions of metaphysics and theology, but at the same time believes that hope and faith in goodness, beauty, and truth will make surer not the findings of abstruse thought but the instinctive urge towards discovery, which sometimes gets tangled and confused in the subtleties of dialectic.

No doubt casual readers, above all when learned, misunderstood, but to how many of the more modest and patient did those books bring light and healing!

So too in his criticism of literature, his repetitions, though helpful to many at first, may now seem excessive, and those general characters which he set up as standards may now appear inapplicable or unreal. He judged, I think rightly, that the perspective of his day demanded them, and they were deduced from the works which had longest stood the test of European attention. To-day not only Hebrew but Egyptian, Persian, Hindu, Japanese, and Chinese masterpieces have come to stand beside those of Greece, and have advocates who claim equality for them; even primitive and savage art has been so exalted. The very idea of a standard seems inept to me, and I believe Arnold is actually nearer to me in this than most of our modern critics. They seem always to wish to substitute new standards for old, while I am persuaded that no standard can be more than a temporary convenience

for getting some notion of excellence across to those who do not yet occupy the critic's favoured position. I divine that excellence does not uniformly illustrate any canon but compels the admiration of unprejudiced and delicately poised attention. I am content to leave this compulsion unexplained, as it seems necessary to leave all fundamental perceptions. We cannot answer any 'why' satisfactorily. And with Arnold I believe this to be great gain, as it allows each private psychological make-up to develop from within by its own vitality, while yet remaining free to take advantage of any tram-lines laid down by others, or like a trolley-bus to be guided by an overhead wire or like those who have no pennies for a fare, free to proceed on Shanks's pony. As he saw, we can only be judged by our intimate sense of approaching our goal. This may, of course, delude us, but until experience or criticism so convince us, the only honest course is to proceed in the same direction however slowly. Metaphysically this approximates to Bradley's notion that the divine will is present in conscience, though not necessarily dominant there.

As a literary critic Arnold seems to me chiefly valuable by the number of times he points to a line or passage of exceptional value. Also by his vivid and reasoned sense of the gulfs between the success of talent . . . of genius . . . of greatness. As Flaubert said, 'genius is not rare', whereas the full felicities of impulse, intention, and execution are. Arnold's reasons and standards I tend to reject as temporary machinery for reaching his audience and more or less excellent in view of that purpose. He was certainly unlucky, while asserting architectonics to be the supreme virtue of masterpieces,<sup>1</sup> to spend so much time in sampling styles by single lines, leaving the nature of the asserted architecture very little developed, but this was probably because his audience was not able to chew and so must needs be spoon-fed. He frequently implies something beyond what he says which he might say as soon as he could imagine its being understood. So he tells us Spinoza logically interpreted the Bible according to what it reveals about itself, and contrasts this

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Poems*.

with what the Jews and the Christians had made of it, yet never tells us his own opinion. In the same way Arnold, in that essay and on other occasions hypothetically telling us what has been or would be thought under certain conditions, often conceals his own private opinion which, he considered, could not helpfully be received till after certain changes had been effected in the point of view of his audience. You must be keen and search his letters and poems to divine much that he purposely left obscure.

No doubt his purpose of initiating those whom a poor civilization had deprived of what should be given to every likely intelligence resulted in a bias against irreligion and sexual licence which has only quite recently come once more to seem reasonable to the consciously advanced. We have passed through a period of revolt against the ideas of those who failed to avert the war, but no generally received code or attitude seems to have been elicited to replace the old taboos, only a confusion of experiments, in which kindness and fairness have on the whole perhaps suffered, so that many turn in disgust to the discarded morality and beliefs that at least served, however imperfectly. Probably the new frankness about sex will prove a real gain. Arnold's attitude is more complex than has usually been admitted. His judgments on *Madame Bovary*, Shelley's life,<sup>1</sup> and the goddess Aselgeia<sup>2</sup> seem hopelessly middle-class to most young people, but thus they impute conceptions which he rejected when considering Burns and Byron. He did not deny the possibility of success in treating such themes. He even insisted that an English translation of the Greek lyric poets should be 'drenched in flesh and blood',<sup>3</sup> though he might have suggested that only poetry greater than any since Milton's could master the difficulties presented by the theme of sexuality. Over Wordsworth's 'Ruth' he confessed that he suffered too much to look steadily at a picture of the desertion of a young, innocent, and loving wife. This comes near the real point;

<sup>1</sup> *Essays in Criticism*. Second series.

<sup>2</sup> *Discourses in America: Numbers*, pp. 40-60.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 121.

what is disparaged is not merely fairness but the possibility of devotion's success . . . that is, the whole human hope. For Proust that hope has vanished; the most that can be saved is power to revive those scenes and emotions among which the illusion dissolved, but which remain his nearest approach to it. Goethe in *Faust* tried to restore the emotional balance with angels, but Arnold felt his success was less than complete. His passionate need was to preserve the good in hand; no one was less revolutionary, less willing to destroy in order to build anew, yet no one was more precise and radical in prospecting change. For instance: he proposed that the Church of England should transform itself into a National Society for the Promotion of Goodness and wean itself from old idolatries . . . that politicians should always prefer equality and forswear advantage grabbing . . . that poets should cultivate a religious devotion to perfection till they advantageously replaced prophets and theologians. Yet all these vast projects were seen behind the next step in each direction, the practicability of which was the chief theme of his advocacy. In comparison to the great wastes of the unassimilated universe, little has been prepared for human consumption by those who have lived most successfully in religion, in poetry, in art, or even in science.

He held that Shelley, Keats, and Tennyson had brought in a vogue for 'exquisite bits' which, for a nation that already had the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, was like carrying coals to Newcastle. Besides 'More and more I feel bent against the modern English habit (too much encouraged by Wordsworth) of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud, instead of making anything'.<sup>1</sup>

No, such caddis-worm structures with their soft, shapeless contents were not to his liking! He looked for architecture, not for self-communings, *In Memoriam*. For complete shapes, not for strings of jewels. He justly appreciated Keats's greatness in an essay unsurpassed for proportion, and intended a second essay on Shelley's poetry to balance that on his life.

<sup>1</sup> *Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Arnold Whitridge, p. 17.



His own poems make the best comment on Tennyson's, not by succeeding better, but by being more sagely planned. He acknowledged that Tennyson had more felicity of phrase and that his own *élan* had been damaged by too much discipline. The average hold on poetry he knew to be weak and vacillating. If a few works have absorbed the youth, years pass, and their power is frozen into formulas of approval or veiled by indifference. To live vividly in regard to the affections is rare; in other fields still more so. Excitements such as horse-races occasion become the nearest approach to vital moments and are their caricature. 'Homer animates—Shakespeare animates,' to add zest to melancholy dreams is all *The Scholar-Gipsy* does, as the writer of it severely decides.<sup>1</sup> 'Poetry can only subsist' by including religion, 'a poetry which has such an immense task to perform must be very plain, direct and severe' and not depend 'on exquisite bits and images'.<sup>2</sup> Was he right? If poetry carries the best stimulus of life into the future, that is, if it animates in the full sense of the word, will it not have to be as exquisite, as severe? Beauty and exquisiteness may in themselves be animating . . . quickening to the ripest characters? Arnold himself avowed: 'If one loved what was beautiful and interesting in itself passionately enough, one would produce what was excellent.'<sup>3</sup>

Arnold's poems may probably retain some human admiration longer than anything else he has written. All his ideas receive their *vraie vérité* in them. *Empedocles* more and more appears the most considerable poem of a comparable length by a Victorian. No doubt faults may be found besides that which prompted the poet to withdraw it. However, the contrite suicide of its climax compares favourably with the hysterical impotence of Hardy's bafflement or the cynical impotence of *The Hollow Men*, both as mood and wealth of implication and above all in adequacy of verse rhythm. No fault is imputed to the universe but only to the soul that has lost hold on the best that it had known. As in *Lear*, the blackness and insignificance of the tragedy sets off the persistent worship of beauty and goodness. Yet, of course, the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

poem is inferior to *Lear* by the paucity and monotony of the means of realization.

*The Voice*, *Stagirus*, *To a Gipsy Child*, *Mycerinus*, *The Strayed Reveller*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *Requiescat*, *The Scholar-Gipsy*, *Dover Beach*, and even perhaps *A Southern Night* seem to me fully successful poems. Not even Rossetti can, I think, show so considerable a group so varied in form and attack. Read by themselves they are more striking than merged in his other poetry, where some are felt to share general characters which are less obtrusive when these are viewed apart. A deep inward vitality in each thrills me still, and for felicity and integrity of movement most are unrivalled. Swinburne was haunted by

From doubt where all is double<sup>1</sup>

and the nine succeeding lines. He shadowed their movement but never succeeded in making it part of such an organic whole. One or two of these poems do not fully satisfy my curiosity: to what does *The Voice* refer? Merely to an affair like that described in the Marguerite groups (*Switzerland* and *Faded Leaves*) which Arnold asserted to be fiction. Or may we associate it with his acquiescence in Senancour's outlook as contrasted with Dr. Arnold's or Cardinal Newman's even?<sup>2</sup> The memory of a voice is described that once stirred passion and devotion but has been proved to be misleading—to have become a temptation.

O unforgotten voice, thy whispers come  
Like wanderers from the world's extremity  
Unto their ancient home

seems forced used of a single siren, but used of a point of view—a discarded faith embodied in a great teacher—gains proportion. Perhaps, however, it is unnecessary to think of any one separation. Put beside the *Forsaken Merman*, the Marguerite groups, and *The New Sirens* we may suppose them various embodiments of the emotion of repeated severance through which in his self-discipline Arnold passed,

<sup>1</sup> *Poetical Works: Stagirus*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Discourses in America: Essay on Emerson*, pp. 139–42, and *Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold*, pp. 55–67.

not excluding others which Senancour, Georges Sand, and Clough underwent and with which Arnold sympathetically and creatively identified himself. Here, perhaps, the paragraph of a letter addressed to Clough sheds light.

The true world for my love to live in is, a general Torpor, with here and there a laughing or a crying Philosopher. And whilst my misguided Relation<sup>1</sup> exchanges the decency God dressed his Features in for the déshabille of an Emotee, we, my love, lovers of one another and fellow-worshippers of Isis while we believe in the universality of Passion as Passion, will keep pure our Aesthetics by remembering its one-sidedness as doctrine. Oh my love suffer me to stop a little.—Very much later, almost night. Oh my love, good night.<sup>2</sup>

Clough, Arnold's senior by four years, is in these early letters frequently addressed as 'my love' and the marriage of their minds referred to as complete and unique, 'we agree together like two lambs in a world of wolves'.<sup>3</sup> 'I really have clung to you in spirit more than to any other man.'<sup>4</sup> To them 'seeming sole to awake',<sup>5</sup> England appeared provokingly torpid, but the younger spied advantage in this situation; it was better than to be submerged by an emotion, the grounds of which must no longer be canvassed, as those are who yield to the eternal croon of Rome, and gave also an opportunity to arouse and help those who otherwise would remain steeped in torpor. Clough as the senior, since they then seemed almost equally gifted, led, but gradually he loses his way while Arnold finds his, yet even to the end insists that he expects more comprehension from his old friend than from any other man. He spoke his real mind to Clough and from him he least hid his life.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps some may be unable to conceive the trance of absorption from which some of these poems issued. The occasion of the address to a Gipsy Child once seemed to me disproportionate to the weight and power of the poem, but

<sup>1</sup> Tom Arnold in course of becoming a Roman Catholic.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. i, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Clough*, pp. 129–30.

<sup>5</sup> *Poetical Works*: p. 45, *In Utrumque Paratus*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

reading this passage addressed to Clough, the intensity of the meditations from which both proceeded flooded me and I understood the completeness and poise of the *Forsaken Mer-man*. No doubt with such ardency Arnold, like Shakespeare, might have got entangled in some 'waste of shame', as he imagines himself doing in the Marguerite groups,

Days flew—ah soon I could discern  
A trouble in thine alter'd air: &c.<sup>1</sup>

but probably at that time he had felt as he later wrote:

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow  
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow,<sup>2</sup>

and proceeded up the steep hill he was climbing. There was no need to repeat Shakespeare's experiment since its result in loss and regret had been vicariously depicted. And so he sighs

I struggle towards the light, and ye  
Once longed for storms of love,  
If with the light ye cannot be  
I bear that ye remove.<sup>3</sup>

He wrote to Clough from the Baths of Leuk, September 29th, 1848:

I . . . linger one day at the Hotel Bellevue for the sake of the blue eyes of one of its inmates [this incident enlarged and idealized may have suggested the fiction of Marguerite]. . . .<sup>4</sup> I am glad to be tired of an author: one link in the immense series of cognoscenda et indagenda dispatched. More particularly is this my feeling with regard to (I hate the word) women. We know beforehand all they can teach us: yet we are obliged to learn it directly from them. Why here is a marvellous thing. The following is curious—

'Say this of her:

The day was, thou wert not: the day will be,  
Thou wilt be most unlovely: shall I chuse  
Thy little moment life of loveliness  
Betwixt blank nothing and abhorred decay

<sup>1</sup> *Poetical Works: A Farewell*, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, *Shakespeare*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *Absence*, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 91.

To glue my fruitless gaze on, and to pine,  
 Sooner than those twin reaches of great time,  
 When thou art either nought, and so not loved,  
 Or somewhat, but that most unloveable,  
 That preface and post-scribe thee ?'—

Farewell, my love, to meet I hope at Oxford: not alas in Heaven: tho: thus much I cannot but think: that our spirits retain their conquests: that from the height they succeed in raising themselves to, they can never fall. Tho: this *uti possidetis* principle may be compatible with entire loss of individuality and of power to recognize one another.

Therefore, my well-known love, accept my heartiest greeting and farewell, while it is called to-day.

Yours,  
 M. ARNOLD.<sup>1</sup>

And so:

Back with the conscious thrill of shame.<sup>2</sup>

Less felicitous than the poems separated above are those pedantically imitative of models in the grand style, *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Thyrsis*; *Merope* is effective too; my ears retain another mother's shriek which cleft the intense silence, when she raised her axe over her sleeping son in the performance given by Gwendoline Bishop and her People's Free Theatre Company at Hoxton; though as poetry it is nowhere so successful as the *Fragment of an Antigone* which Arnold says, when later engaged on miming Grecian form, 'supports me and in some degree subjugates destiny'.<sup>3</sup>

For myself I cannot believe in the grand style deduced from masterpieces and to be imitated or assimilated on novel occasions. General characters are never for me the seat of value, which always attaches to particular characters: so that a success cannot be repeated but will always remain unique. Not what is shared with other poems, but what is unsharable gives value—the poise, the fusion, the control. No doubt in the period of growth imitation may give birth to inspiration, but even then it is never a prescribed programme.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetical Works*, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters to Clough*, p. 101.

Still less successful, *Tristram*, *The New Sirens*, *La Grande Chartreuse*, *The Margaret* and *Obermann* poems yet contain first-rate passages of some length; while a few among his moral poems and sonnets rise as high as gnomic verse ever does. Not only this, he is the most self-consistent poet; all his many interests and writings, including his reports and letters, hold together and create a character, unique not by eccentricity but by integrity.

I conceive that among his contemporaries he produced the greatest bulk of poetry from which the sagacious will continue to derive pleasure and profit.

He would have deprecated more recent fashions, as he did that set by Keats and Shelley, for making poetry depend disproportionately on felicities of detail. To see 'life steadily and see it whole'<sup>1</sup> remains as rare as to dominate a creation of considerable length, so that it animates men's finest faculties, as Shakespeare or Sophocles or even Racine did.

Though so frequently broken into by quotations, his prose nevertheless achieves fine crescendoes of effect as in *The Preface*, 1853, and the *Essays on Byron*, on Keats, or the *Speech on unveiling a Window-memorial to Milton*.

His thought was based on the 'I too but seem' of *In Utrumque Paratus*. But, as he perceived, this necessary modesty leads nowhere, prompts to no enterprise. Life has to be lived, and for him where the world was most alert: therefore to improve his hold on goodness, beauty, and truth in actuality imposed itself with the strength of illusion, was accepted as a duty, and pursued as an art. Though our efforts must frequently prove mistaken we can but persevere; as he said to the child he was examining, 'Go on, my dear, go on, it's all wrong, but never mind, go on'. (Selwyn Image, who heard him, imitated his broad pronunciation and strong rhythm.)

Effort maintained, in spite of failure, results in a sense of becoming what we most truly are, and enables us to be kindly and humorous when detecting our own and our fellow's blunders. Not 'sad lucidity' but courageous perspicacity is his

<sup>1</sup> *Poetical Works: To a Friend*, p. 2.

note; no nonsense and no flinching, united with tenderness for every delicacy of emotion. The publication of his complete Note Books, promised and long overdue, will furnish us with the daily diet, not of his mind only, but of his temper and radiance, and prove a unique initiation.<sup>1</sup>

Now as I close his books which I once knew so well, I resolve in future to reopen them more frequently and feel like Dr. Williams, 'the old head of Jesus (College), who said audibly after a pause',<sup>2</sup> when Arnold finished his last lecture on Celtic Poetry, 'The Angel ended . . .'

The angel ended and in Adam's ear  
So charming left his voice that he awhile  
Thought him still speaking.<sup>3</sup>

So his voice remains for me more real than that of any of his contemporaries till it seems I have actually heard, nay, still hear him speaking.

T. STURGE MOORE.

<sup>1</sup> If only the editor has the good sense to translate all the quotations in Greek, Latin, French, German, or Italian, so as to make it useful to everybody whether they possess one, two, or none of these languages.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. i, p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> *Paradise Lost*, viii. 1.

## THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY HEROIC LINE

IT is a commonplace of literary history that English metre is bad from the age of Chaucer to the age of Surrey. At one time this was popularly attributed to the changing state of the language, and specially to the loss of that final *-e* on which the syllabic pattern of Chaucer's verse seems to depend. But this is an explanation which presupposes part of the phenomenon to be explained. If a man understands a metre he can fit it to the language he hears spoken in his own time: if he cannot do so, that means he does not understand it; just as, if a boy cannot repeat a geometrical proof when the master has changed the letters or turned the figure upside down, we know that he has not understood it. The master's change of the letters may, indeed, be described as the cause of the boy's failure in his lesson, but it is a cause that can become operative only on one condition—the boy's prior failure to understand the proof. In the same way, linguistic change can produce metrical chaos only on condition that the poets were already deaf to metre when the change overtook them. If they had clearly grasped a metrical Form they could have applied it unchanged to the changing Matter of language, as we, who understand the Form of Shakespeare's verse, do not, like Shakespeare, put *motion* where a trisyllable is required. If the explanation of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century verse is to be found at all, it must not be sought in the history of the language.

We often speak carelessly as if 'metre' in general were bad in this period; but we are usually thinking only of the lines which we try to read as decasyllabics. The octosyllabics even of Lydgate are good enough; so are the carols and other lyrics, and so, in its way, is the loose ballad metre of *Gamelyn* and *Beryn*. Even in Wyatt the stumbling-blocks occur far more often in what seem to be decasyllabics than in his lyric metres. I say 'what seem to be decasyllabics' because that is precisely the point on which we must not begin by begging the question. In the following discussion I shall give the



arbitrary name 'Fifteenth-Century Heroic' to the line which we find in *The Temple of Glas*, *The Pastime of Pleasure*, Barclay's *Eclogues*, Wyatt's *Complaint upon Love to Reason*, and, in general, all those poems which appear at first sight to attempt the decasyllabic line without success. The question I propose is whether the Fifteenth-Century Heroic is, in fact, an attempt at our decasyllable; and, if it is not, what else it may be.

At the outset we shall do well to remind ourselves that the modern decasyllable, as we have known it from Spenser to Bridges, is a very strange metre. In the first place it has an uneven number of beats, thus differing from the ancient hexameter, the *Kalevala* metre, and the old Germanic alliterative line. In the second place—and perhaps in consequence of this—it has no medial break, thus differing from the hexameter, the alliterative line, the Fourteener, and the Fourteener's ancestor, the line of *Ormulum*. This second characteristic is obscured by the unfortunate practice of calling any pause in a decasyllabic line its *caesura*, and thus suggesting that it is, like the ancient *caesura*, a metrical fact. It is nothing of the sort. It can occur anywhere the poet chooses and need not occur at all, and is therefore no part of the pattern, though it may be a very important part of the poet's handling of the pattern so as to move passion or delight. It is a rhetorical and syntactical fact, not a metrical fact. Hence Milton rightly tells us that 'musical delight' consists on the one hand 'in apt numbers' and, on the other, in 'the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another'—that is, on the shifting relations between the metrical pattern (the 'numbers') and the rhetorical or syntactical units which are fitted into it. The very fact that the latter can be varied at will proves that they are not part of the pattern. To 'draw out variously' the true metrical *caesura* of the hexameter does not lead to 'musical delight'; it leads, or led, only to the birch—and rightly as far as metrical science is concerned.

Now the result of these two characteristics is that the decasyllabic line stands at a much farther remove than

almost any other metre from the natural modes of rhythmical human behaviour, whether in song or dance or shout. One's feet trip it instinctively to a hexameter or an octosyllabic. The *Kalevala* metre, if not handled with great discretion, pounds in our ear like a heart-beat. A half-line of Anglo-Saxon verse, once metrically understood, can hardly be heard, even by the inner ear, as anything but what it is. But the decasyllable is no such thing. In all good metre, no doubt, there should be some degree of discrepancy, some room for play, between the pattern (the noise the words *pretend* to make) and the natural pronunciation: but the decasyllabic outstrips all others in the discrepancy it allows and even demands. The octosyllabic can do wonders in this direction by a skilful use of long words, but it cannot avoid many lines of the type 'The wynd was good, the schip was yare', in which the metrical pattern coincides exactly with the real, or with any imaginable, pronunciation. Compared with the decasyllable, which is all art and spirit, it remains mere nature. But the decasyllabic, even if it wished, can hardly impose its rhythm in this way. Even 'And singing masons building roofs of gold' hints a tiny difference between the ideal pattern and the real speech-rhythm—'building' counts for a shade more ideally than it does in natural reading. The ease with which our prose admits 'blank verse lines', and the difficulty which many find in detecting them, are further proofs of the same fact. Hence all poetry in this metre has to be read with what we may call 'double audition'.

Most of us have been so trained to this that we are now hardly conscious of it—though it is very significant that a generation is growing up which has already begun to lose the trick. We do not usually notice that the line 'While other animals unactive range' (*P.L.* iv. 621) is pure *Beowulf* if we attend solely to the speech-rhythm; the first half being the C type with two disyllabic lifts, the second, type B. *While other animals* is, from this point of view, own brother to *se þe wæteregeas* (*Beow.* 1260), and *unactive range* to *be wæpnedmen* (1284). Still less do we notice the converse—how many admirable decasyllables we could dig out of *Beowulf* if

we started with the assumption that it was a blundering attempt at our familiar modern line: as,

Swæse gesiþas swa he selfa bæd. (29)

Gewat þa neosiam syþþan niht becom. (115)

In Caines cynne þone cwealm gewræc. (107)

But perhaps the truth can be put in its clearest light by an experiment. Read

I have given no man of my fruit to eat,

I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.

Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,

This wild new growth of the corn and vine;

and now read this:

I comfort few and many I torment,

Where one is spared a thousand more are spent;

I have trodden many down beneath my feet,

I have given no man of my fruit to eat.

I conjecture that you have read the last line of my second example differently from the opening line of my first: yet as mere language, separated from the ideal pattern, they are identical. And this, let us notice in passing, is a strong and beautiful example of Aristotle's doctrine that the whole is 'naturally prior' to its parts.

The modern decasyllabic, then, is a metre which demands from those who are to write or read it a power of 'double audition' which must be the growth of long training and for which nothing in their previous poetical experience had prepared the Englishmen of Chaucer's time. If this is so, two questions arise: (1) Is it probable that Chaucer himself had caught the music of the modern decasyllabic and intended his countrymen to hear this music in his own verse? (2) Even if Chaucer did so intend, is it at all probable that they would have understood him? The first question I leave for the present unanswered.

To the second question only one consideration prevents me from answering 'No' at once. It may be urged that though the line of twelve syllables was new in England it was old in France, and that French examples would have prepared the

ears of Chaucer's educated audience to understand the music of the modern decasyllabic. This argument would be strong if the French ten-syllable line had, in fact, run to the same tune as our modern—that is, Spenserian—decasyllabic. But it does not. The French verse of Chaucer's immediate predecessors had parted company with stress-accent as a metrical element and was, in that respect, the same as French verse in the nineteenth century. A single line from Deschamps—

Angleterre, d'elle ce nom s'applique—

should be enough to convince us. Here we have no 'drumming decasyllabon' but a mere ten syllables. If Chaucer was in fact introducing the tune of Spenser, Milton, and Tennyson, then he was introducing a new thing for which French poetry furnished only a hint, and to which French poetry would hardly at all have opened the ears of his contemporaries. Italian poetry would have helped them a great deal more: but we have not yet evidence that many of them knew it.

It seems to me, then, that we must answer the second question in the negative. If Chaucer meant his lines to be read as the modern scholar reads them, it is extremely likely that he was disappointed. Indeed, having begun his greatest poem with

Whán that Ápril with his shóures sóote,

he was asking a good deal if he expected readers bred on the alliterative line, the octosyllabic, the *Horn* metre, and the metre of *Gamelyn*, to see at once that the poem was to go to the pattern if 'And singing masons building roofs of gold'.

Thus far we have argued *a priori*. It remains to be seen what Chaucer's successors actually did. In the interests of clarity I am going to give a purely static account of the Fifteenth-Century Heroic as I conceive it to be, neglecting for the present the history of its rise and its various modifications.

I believe that the modern reader can learn this metre most easily from William Allingham's *The Fairies* (number 769 in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*). This poem is printed in short lines which may equally well be treated as half-lines. I have never heard of any one who called it unmetrical or

found a difficulty in reading it: but as soon as we attempt a metrical analysis we find ourselves in trouble. The first four lines,

Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen,  
We daren't go a-hunting  
For fear of little men,

can be treated as lines of three stresses, the first two in falling, the last two in rising, rhythm. But the fifth ('Wee folk, good folk') can equally well be treated as two stresses. Yet we do not feel that the metre has changed either here or in such lines as 'High on the hill-top' and 'For seven years long'. We may solve our problem in two ways. We can say that all the lines have three beats and explain away the apparent dimeters, pleading that the strong pause in 'Wee folk, good folk' compensates for a missing stress, that *years* carries a stress in 'For sév'n yeárs lóng', and *on* a phantasmal or theoretical stress in 'Hígh òn the hill-top'. On the other hand, we may say that all the lines have two full stresses and no more—the first syllable of *airy* being weaker than *up* or than the first syllable of *mountain*—but that they admit a third half stress, like the D and E types in Anglo-Saxon verse. If we adopt the second explanation we may notice that the rhythm of *dædcene monn* is very close to that of 'Áll night awáke' and '(The) Óld King sít's'. In the meantime, however, without awaiting a decision on the metrical problem, we have enjoyed the poem. We want a definition of what we have enjoyed that does not prejudice the ultimate metrical problem. I suggest the following: a long line divided by a sharp medial break into two half-lines, each half-line containing not less than two or more than three stresses, and most half-lines hovering between two and three stresses in a manner analogous to the Anglo-Saxon types D and E. When the scheme is thus stated in the abstract, we are at first tempted to say that something so vague as this cannot be called a metre at all: but against this I set the fact *The Fairies* is felt to be metrical by every reader. Indeed its metre is not even an unfamiliar one. We heard something

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like it before we could read in 'Péase pudding hót' and 'Óld Mòther Slípper-Slapper'. We read something like it not many years since in Mr. de la Mare's *All that's Past*.<sup>1</sup> We find it in the famous carol—

He cáme àl so stíll  
There his móther wás  
As déw in Apríl  
That fálleth òn the gráss.

If such a metre is admitted, we may proceed to note that it must every now and then yield lines which can be read as decasyllables and which certainly will be read as such by any reader who starts with the assumption that the poem is attempting to be decasyllabic. Thus from *The Fairies* we can get

Some in the reeds óf the black mountain lake  
With frogs for their watch-dógs all night awake

and from the carol

I sing of a maiden thát is makëles . . .  
Mother and maiden was never none but she.

It will also tend to produce lines that can be read as loose 'anapaestic' four-beats if we start with a misunderstanding. Thus in Allingham's poem,

They stóle little Bridget for séven years lóng.

If so read, poems in this metre will seem to consist of some decasyllables, some 'anapaestic' four-beats, and some floundering lines that are neither one nor the other: but that is just what many of the 'bad' poems between Chaucer and

<sup>1</sup> Here the ideal norm seems to be 3 beats in the first half-line and 2 in the second ('Where snów sleeps cóld beneáth the ázure skíes'). But we also find in the first half-line only 2 beats ('Sing such a hís-tory') and 2½ ('Vèry óld are the wóods') and, in the second, what I take to be 3 ('Óh, nó man knóws'). It will be noticed that if we lineate the poem in whole lines these make rough decasyllabics, though the reader who treated them simply as such would be missing the real quality of the poem. Cf., in the same poet, *Song of the Mad Prince*, *Jim Jay*, and *Some One*.

Spenser sound like. Thus in the *Assembly of Gods* we can read as very stumbling decasyllables—

The shéte from his bódý doun hé let fáll,  
And ón a rewde máner salúted áll the róut,  
With a bóld voyse cárpýng wórdys stoút.  
But he spáke all hóllow ás it hád be óon  
Had spóke in anóther wórld that had wóo begóon. (l. 441)

But the result is extremely ugly and the slurring of *rewde* in the second line is jaw-breaking. I think it more probable that the poet meant us to read,

The shéte from his bódý  
Doún he let fáll,  
And ón a rèwde máner  
Salúted áll the róut,  
With a bóld voyse  
Cárpýng wórdýs stoút.  
Bút he spáke all hóllow,  
Ás it hád be óon  
Had spóke in anóther wórld  
Thát had wóo begóon.

Even this may not seem very melodious to modern ears and *With a bóld vòice* still gives trouble: but I believe it can be carried off by a reader who is thinking in terms of the nursery-rhyme metre which I am suggesting and who puts a strong accent on *with* and *bold*. The last four half-lines, in their new dress, seem to me good.

Applying the same treatment to Barclay's second *Egloge* (697 et seq.) we get

Then cáll for the priést  
When Í refúse to drínke,  
This ále bréwëd Béntley,  
It máketh mè to wínke.  
Thou sáyest trúe Córnix,  
Beléue me bý the róod,  
No hánd is so súde  
That can álway make góod.  
But tálk of the cóurt  
If thóu hast ány móre,  
Sét doúne the bóttle,  
Sàve some lícour in stóre.

Nothing will make Barclay a good poet; but I submit that such merits as this passage has will disappear if we give it back the usual lineation, and try to read it as decasyllabic verse. In the same way we can get a modicum of beauty out of Elyot's

The blode becometh wan, the eien fyrre bright,  
Like Gorgon the monstre appierynge in the nyght  
(*Boke of the Governour*, II. vi)

by setting it to the country dance of

The blode becómeth wán,  
The eíen fírry bright,  
Like Górgon the mónstre  
Appíerynge in the nýght.

And who would wish to stretch again on the bed of Procrustes these lines from Hawes?

These daúnces trúly  
Músyke hàth me taúght  
To lúte or daúnce,  
But it aváyled nóught;  
For the fýre kíndled  
And wáxëd móre and móre,  
The daúnsynge bléw it  
With her beáute clére.  
My hért sékened  
And begán wàxe sóre;  
A mýnute VI hóures,  
And VI hóures a yére,  
I thóught it wás,  
So hévy wàs my chére.  
But yét fòr to cóver  
My gréte lòve arýght,  
The óutwarde cóunténànce  
I máde gládde and lýght.

(*Pastime of Pleasure*, 1595 et seq.)

A natural objection to my hypothesis may take the form of the question, 'Is there any verse, however decasyllabic, which could not, if we chose, be read as you want us to read Hawes and Barclay?' I must freely confess that there is very little decasyllabic verse which cannot be tortured into what I call the Fifteenth-Century Heroic. From the very



nature of the decasyllable on the one hand and the Fifteenth-Century Heroic on the other, it must, on my view, follow that either metre will yield many lines which could occur in the other: indeed this fact is a necessary part of my case. But there remains a difference between lines which 'can, if we 'choose' be 'tortured' into the Fifteenth-Century Heroic and lines which can be read better and more naturally in that metre than in the decasyllabic. I think 'The shéte fròm his bódý · doún he let fáll' a true Fifteenth-Century Heroic not because it *can* be read thus but because this reading seems to me more natural, pleasing, and probable than 'The shéte from his bódý doun hé let fáll', and because the neighbouring line 'And on a rewde maner he saluted all the rout' is quite intolerable as a decasyllabic. Conversely, I do not read Pope's line as 'A míghty máze! · but nót withoút a plán', though it would be possible to do so, because the alternative 'A míghty máze but nót withoút a plán' seems more probable and pleasing, and also because the neighbouring line 'Of all who blindly creep or sightless soar' is clearly a very good decasyllable and would be atrocious as

Of áll who blindly créep  
Or síghtless soár.

Once again we meet Aristotle. The metre of a poem does not result from the metre of individual lines; it is the whole which determines the parts.

The distinction between what is best read according to my hypothesis and what can only be tortured into it must, of course, be applied to the late medieval poets whom we are now considering. I do not claim that all can be read as Fifteenth-Century Heroics. I find that *The Assembly of Gods* is my best example and that most of Hoccleve will not fit in at all. Such a line as 'No wight with me in thee, my sone hath part'<sup>1</sup> would have to be 'murdered' if we tried to force it in.

At this point no one will forget Hoccleve's own statement that he was the friend and pupil of Chaucer.<sup>2</sup> Have we here

<sup>1</sup> *Lamentation of the Green Tree*, iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Regement*, 1960, 2077.

a real proof of this discipleship and, with it, a proof that Chaucer was writing true decasyllabics but that the tradition (for reasons I have suggested) was very soon lost?

My answer to this question is little more than a guess. There are lines in Chaucer which read much more naturally as Fifteenth-Century Heroics: 'Whan Zéphirus eék · with his swéte bréeth',<sup>1</sup> or 'Bút a góvernoùr · wýly and wíse'.<sup>2</sup> His licences at the middle of the line may not be incompatible with the true decasyllabic movement; but his habit of knocking off the initial unaccented syllable is so foreign to that movement that I question whether any decasyllabic poet from Surrey to the present day has dreamed of imitating it, though the corresponding licence in octosyllabics ('Towered cities please us then') is so common and natural that we hardly notice it. On the other hand, there are hundreds of lines in Chaucer that demand pure decasyllabic reading—'God woot no lussheburges payen ye',<sup>3</sup> &c. And the pleasure which not a few generations have now had in Chaucer thus read is strong, though not conclusive, evidence that they have read him correctly.

Chaucer could not transport the rhythm of the French decasyllable directly into English, for that metre, being unaccentual, has no rhythm in the English sense. You cannot export snakes from Iceland. Chaucer had run against this difficulty very early in his career when he was translating the *Roman de la Rose* and had sometimes adopted the desperate solution of writing English verses which have the right number of syllables and ignore accent. Such lines as

With a thredē basting my sleeves (104)

And litel coude of norture (179)

Upon any worthy man falle (255)

would seem metrical to a Frenchman: to us they are not verse at all. When, in his maturity, he began to naturalize the ten-syllabled line he did not repeat this blunder. What exactly he did I doubt if we shall ever know; but it seems likely to me that he attempted a compromise. On the one hand, he followed the French in having (usually) ten syllables

<sup>1</sup> C.T. A 5.

<sup>2</sup> C.T. B 3130.

<sup>3</sup> C.T. B 3152.

in a line, and sometimes he had five full stresses, thus attaining the modern decasyllabic tune. But the other tune—that which I have attempted to describe—was running in his head and he allowed it to intrude; he even welcomed it by having many strong medial pauses, by admitting hypermetrical syllables at the pause, and, above all, by sometimes dropping the unaccented first syllable of the whole line and thus forcing the first half-line into a more native rhythm. Such compromise was possible because, as all my examples show, the one metre slips easily into the other. I suspect that his verse was a precarious balance of different metrical forces. He himself knew how to read it aloud; but perhaps, even from the first, few others could read it exactly as he wished. Hoccleve and some of the poets of the *Chauceriana* may have learned the art, but in Lydgate the strong medial pause and the essentially undecasyllabic movement ('frows and wóod and maléncolik') are already normal, and the fact that we usually have nine or ten syllables makes little difference.<sup>1</sup> In the poets who follow, down to, and partly including, Wyatt, the number of syllables ceases to matter and the rough metre which I call the Fifteenth-Century Heroic is established.

A glance at the earlier history of English verse will perhaps render my theory more acceptable. The starting-point of that history, and the key to some of its mysteries, is the alliterative metre of *Beowulf* and Pseudo-Cædmon. This consists of two sharply divided half-lines, of which each has normally two stresses. But what are called the D and E

<sup>1</sup> Lydgate's often-quoted admission that he took no heed 'nouthur of shorte nor longe' is quite irrelevant to any discussion of his metre. To neglect 'short and long' in English verse either means nothing or means 'to make no distinction between accented and unaccented syllables'. If this were what Lydgate had done, we should find his verse either merely syllabic (like the lines quoted above from Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*) or else tending to force metrical accents on to weak syllables. In fact, however, we find him comparatively heedless of the number of syllables and generally attentive to stress. His statement about 'shorte and longe' is therefore merely a piece of conventional medieval self-depreciation and throws no light whatsoever on his practice.

types of half-line show an all-important variation; they have two and a half—two full stresses and one medium stress. From the decay of the alliterative metre the metre of Layamon's *Brut* is engendered. In the *Brut* the type with two stresses ('Hórs and Héngest') is retained, and so, unless my ear plays me false, is a type with two and a half ('And Héngest swithe faire'); but we also find—and doubtless as a development of the old two and a half—a type with three full stresses—'Thá queth Héngest to than kinge'. The total result is that the formula for Layamon's metre is 'Two, or two-and-a-half, or three'.

Two different developments then follow. In *King Horn*, on the one hand, we find the type with three stresses erected into the norm, though lines that seem to have only two are still occasionally permitted ('The héved of wénte', 'Réynhild mi dóhter'). But in *On god Ureisun* liberty is still allowed between two and three. Thus we can have two stresses in the first half and two in the second:

Pléieth and swéieth · and síngeth bitwéonen.

Or three in the first, and two in the second:

Crístes mílde móder · séynte Marie.

Or three in both:

Mi líf and mí tohópe · min héale míd iwísse.

Traces of similar variability can be found in the Middle English *Bestiary* and in the *Proverbs of Alfred*; and it has never been denied that in the later developments of the alliterative metre itself, in *Gawain and the Green Knight* for example, three-stressed and two-stressed types occur side by side in the first half of the line. If this background to Chaucer's metrical activities be remembered, and if it be also remembered that the French decasyllabic, being unaccented, was no metre at all to English ears, the hypothesis which I advance about the true nature of his verse will not be judged very improbable. Nor is it unlikely, if such a native rhythm were allowed a footing in Chaucer, that in his successors it would rebel, and rebel successfully, against its foreign and syllabic master, thus giving the Fifteenth-Century Heroic.

When this also begins to decline, the Elizabethans, attending to one only of its many variations, try to read it as the rough four-beat line which Gascoigne apparently attributes to Chaucer and which Spenser uses in his February eclogue. To that tune Chaucer was read for centuries, and to such reading, perhaps, we owe the heavy over-emphasis which the older critics laid on his comic elements, since these best survived such treatment. Then came the beginnings of modern scholarship and the discovery of final *-e*. Critics whose ears had been trained on the Greek iambic and the modern decasyllable then learned to read the verse of Chaucer as if it were that of Milton or Pope. What could not be so read was quarantined as 'licence' or emended, and the metre of Chaucer's successors was dismissed as a blundering attempt at pure decasyllabics. But all this time the rhythm of the Fifteenth-Century Heroic had continued a humble existence in popular lyric and nursery rhyme: it had, perhaps, contributed in some degree to our choice of the Italian decasyllable as our principal metre; it had started from hiding to delight even learned readers in *The Shepherd's Sirena*; and it survived to produce a few poems 'choice and light' in modern times. It is this survival which has now enabled us—if my theory is true—to recover the metrical history of the later Middle Ages in England.

C. S. LEWIS.

## THE VARIETIES OF STYLE IN *HAMLET*

[One of the activities of the English Association is 'to discuss methods of English teaching'; and it is to the teacher rather than the scholar that this paper is addressed. It is doubtful, however, whether the two functions can profitably be kept distinct, and no university provides a better School of English Literature than the experience of teaching English year after year to a succession of sixth forms. To pass on the textual problems which are the concern of critical scholarship to learners of seventeen or eighteen would be a foolish mistake; nor, I think, will the general reader ever take a serious interest in editorial problems. Yet even to those who are content to receive their text of Shakespeare on trust, there are problems of style in many of the plays, and to discuss such problems in terms of simple literary appreciation may be highly profitable. Such, at least, is the belief in which I have sent the following paper in response to Mr. Binyon's request for a contribution to *Essays and Studies*. The remarks were originally intended for the Sixth Form at Clifton College, but are reproduced here in a somewhat modified form.]

### I

THE style of *Hamlet* may be compared to the imaginary cliff represented in a text-book on geology, designed to illustrate the various epochs in the earth's history. At the bottom are the oldest geological strata, then as the eye travels upwards it passes over those of the intermediate periods, ending at the most recent deposits. In point of style, *Hamlet* is a composite play. It is not my intention in this paper to consider how closely the analogy from geology bears upon the composition of *Hamlet*, though it is possible that the play was, like the cliff, built up by degrees. Rather, I shall try to show that this variety of style is one of the play's great merits: however it came about it is, from the dramatic and poetic points of view; amply justified. The variety of *Hamlet* was emphatically praised by Dr. Johnson, and readers who would be glad to exchange any part of this variety for a more obvious uniformity are perhaps mistaking Shakespeare's intentions in one of the greatest of his plays.

It may be asked whether *Hamlet* stands alone among

Shakespeare's plays in respect of its variety. The matter is one of degree. Shakespeare's plays in general are not marked by a uniformity of style. In one of the earliest, *Love's Labour's Lost*, there is a variety which invites the geological comparison hardly less than *Hamlet*. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, in *Julius Caesar*, in *Macbeth*—to name no more—there are both different kinds of prose and different kinds of verse. But *Hamlet* is an extreme example. For one thing, the versatility of the hero himself demands a range of expression not required by any other character of Shakespeare. Moreover, *Hamlet* is himself a scholar, with the temperament and training of a critic. He has a faculty for extempore verse, he is an acute critic of the drama, and he is annoyed by the affected language of Osric. Some of these qualities are shared by other persons in the play. Polonius has at least pretensions to literary criticism; he condemns the word 'beautified' and he defends 'mobled'; he also finds the first Player's recitation 'too long'. Even the Queen is forced by circumstances into the rôle of a critic when she remarks of the Player Queen, 'the lady doth protest too much'. These points are of course partly due to the nature of the plot itself, for the business connected with *The Murder of Gonzago* naturally arouses various comments. But the fact remains. *Hamlet* is a play which is deeply tinged by literary criticism and history—a play in which a variety of moods and minds calls for a corresponding variety of expression.

## II

It seems perhaps rather artificial to separate the prose from the verse of *Hamlet*; partly because the two are often mingled in the same scene, and the transition from one to the other is often sudden; partly because some of the prose passages are among the most imaginative, even among the most poetical, in the entire drama. In illustration of this last statement I will mention Hamlet's meditation: 'What a piece of work is man!', and his description of Yorick's lips as he gazes on his skull: 'Where be your gibes now?' &c. Prose does not necessarily imply that the emotion is more relaxed,

or that the writing is less pondered than in the rest of the drama.

*Hamlet*, of course, contains many scenes and passages which afford relief to the intensity of the main action. Many of such scenes are, in fact, written in prose; for example, Hamlet's directions to the Players, and the dialogue between the two Gravediggers. But an expedient so crude as writing the tragic scenes in verse and the less tragic scenes in prose is quite foreign to the subtlety of the play. The third scene of the first act is a marked relief after the intensity of the first two scenes, yet it is written entirely in verse. Conversely, the poignant speeches of Ophelia in the scene of her madness are written in prose, mingled with snatches of song. None the less, it is surely true that verse is the normal vehicle of expression in *Hamlet*, and that prose implies some sort of contrast or exception. Can the functions of prose be described in more general and precise terms than this?

Perhaps a roughly accurate result may be reached by the method of exclusion. The use of verse in *Hamlet* is more easily described than the use of prose. Verse is the vehicle for the natural eloquence which the chief persons in the play have at their command. When these persons are using their own idiom, and can count on a serious and sympathetic hearing, they speak in verse. Verse is the usual vehicle for the higher emotions, for dignified and weighty transactions, for self-examination and soliloquy. But when thought is really or supposedly disconnected, when rational converse gives place to the speech of real or assumed madness, when one of the speakers in a dialogue is using an idiom which the other cannot understand or despises, when grave affairs yield to matters of local or contemporary interest, when the dignity of the court is replaced by 'low life'—prose not verse is used. Two points not fully covered by these statements should be noted. Scenes which begin in prose sometimes continue so, beyond a stage when one might have expected a change to verse (e.g. in Act II, Sc. ii, ll. 311–31,<sup>1</sup> Hamlet's meditation is poetic in spirit, but the rest of the scene is in prose).

<sup>1</sup> Line-references are to the one-volume Oxford *Shakespeare*.



Again, Hamlet's directions to the players at the beginning of Act III, Sc. i, might well appear an occasion for verse: his thoughts are surely not less poetical than those in the somewhat similar first scene of Act II, when Polonius is giving directions to Reynaldo; and in other plays Shakespeare generally alludes to theatrical matters in verse; but, as I shall show, the prose which Hamlet addresses to the players has special features of its own.

I will briefly illustrate the principles I have just named. 'Prose is used when thought is really or supposedly disconnected' and in speeches of 'real or assumed madness'. An example occurs in Act II, Sc. ii, where Hamlet, imagined to be mad by the Queen and Polonius, enters reading (l. 170). Again verse yields to prose in Act III, Sc. i, where Hamlet and Ophelia begin to talk at cross-purposes (l. 103), and she soon supposes him to be mad. Prose, too, is used in the wild talk of Hamlet to the King and Ophelia just before the dumb show. It recurs just after the play, in the same scene (ll. 312 and following), where Guildenstern complains with reason:

Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

Prose is also used in the mad speeches of Ophelia, though as usual, Shakespeare gives insanity an undertone of sense: 'matter and impertinency mixed; reason in madness'. Perhaps the neatest illustration of the contrast between verse and prose in this aspect—verse being the vehicle for orderly, and prose for chaotic, thought—is to be found in Act II, Sc. i, where Polonius, giving orders to Reynaldo in verse—laboured verse, it is true, which only just deserves the name—loses the thread of his discourse and drops abruptly into prose:

*Polonius.* Your party in converse, him you would sound,  
 Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes  
 The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured  
 He closes with you in this consequence;  
 'Good sir', or so, or 'friend', or 'gentleman',  
 According to the phrase or the addition  
 Of man and country.

*Reynaldo.*

Very good, my lord.

*Polonius.* And then, sir, does he this,—he does—What was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave?

Prose is used 'when one of the speakers in a dialogue is using an idiom which the other cannot understand or despises'. This description covers various scenes and parts of scenes in which Hamlet gives vent to feelings of contempt or disgust by ambiguous phrases, in which the irony is felt rather than perceived. A typical instance is in Act IV, Sc. ii, where he provokes Rosencrantz to say:

I understand you not, my lord.

To which Hamlet replies:

I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

So, too, in the dialogue with Osric, prose is the natural vehicle for language so obscure in its extreme affectation that neither speaker fully comprehends the meaning of the other. Lastly, prose is natural in dialogues which lie on the outer boundaries of the dramatic action and have little or no dramatic importance. There are two instances in *Hamlet*: the dialogue between Hamlet and Rosencrantz on the boy actors—a dialogue which would certainly have been written in prose even if it did not form part of a prose scene; and the Gravediggers' scene, which is in prose, for the double reason that it lies outside the main action, and that the speakers must obviously use an idiom far removed from the style of King and Courtier. The three letters in the play, Hamlet's letter to Ophelia, and his letters to Horatio and the King, are, as is both usual and natural, all written in prose.

### III

The prose of *Hamlet*, then, is distinguished from the verse, not according to any rigid or mechanical plan, but according to the tact of the poet, which justifies itself by its results, though it cannot be tied down to any simple method. But the prose itself, as the most cursory reading shows, is not all of one variety. The Gravediggers do not talk in the least like Osric, and Hamlet himself has more than one prose style. I

shall not pause long on this point, but as a hint of what might be said, I will quote two short passages. Notice in this one the swift but complex rhythm of Hamlet's prose when his mind is alert:

O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

Contrast with this the equally appropriate rhythm of the First Clown's speech as he unfolds his legal argument to his slower-witted and less conceited companion:

Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: if the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,—mark you that: but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

In order to grasp the significance of the prose style in *Hamlet* one or two points, both about the play itself and about the Elizabethan Age, must be remembered. In the first place, *Hamlet* is a play concerned with a royal court and with courtiers. Prominent in the action is a group of brilliant young men in whose eyes the career of a courtier represents the height of human felicity. Laertes, when we first see him, is anxious to return to France, one of the chief training-grounds of the courtier. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern both aspire to advancement by subordinating themselves, mind and soul, to their royal patrons. In Osric we see a contrast to the more solid ambition of Laertes; for while Laertes aspires to 'honour'—a word always in his lips—Osric is content with a surface-glitter. Yet each, in his own way, is a courtier. Even Hamlet, in spite of his melancholy and 'suits of solemn black', is a courtier, and is so called both by Ophelia and by the King, who invites him to remain at Elsinore as

Our chiefest *courtier*, cousin, and our son.

Now, the question of what constituted a perfect courtier was much debated in all the countries of western Europe during

the sixteenth century. Of many books written on the subject the most famous was Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*. This work was translated by an English writer, Sir Thomas Hoby, under the title of *The Book of Castiglione's Courtyer*. It was published in 1561, and was reprinted in 1577, 1588, and 1603. Castiglione's work discusses, in the form of a dialogue, the qualifications of the perfect Courtier; and among such statements as one would expect, for example

The principal and true profession of a Courtier ought to be  
in feats of arms,

and

I will have our Courtier a perfect horseman for every saddle, is a frequent insistence on the art of self-expression. Various faults in the use of one's native language are discussed, and the standard to be arrived at is summed up as follows:

Then must he couch in a good order that he hath to speak or to write, and afterward express it well with words: the which (if I be not deceived) ought to be apt, chosen, clear, and well applyed, and (above all) in use among the people.

The ideal here described sounds simple and easy; but it is, in fact, the description of a perfect classical style such as, in all ages, is very hard of attainment. The aspirant after good language demands a definite pattern to imitate, rather than a body of general precepts, however sound in themselves. Such a pattern was provided by the prose romance *Euphues* of Sir John Lyly. Imitations of Lyly's style—which has marked characteristics, such as the use of antithesis, frequent allusions to natural history, and a parade of learned authority in support of matters of common knowledge—sprang up fast and gave rise to a style known as euphuism. Apart from Lyly's style, there was a very general cult of affectation in courtly circles, the various forms of which are also known, though less accurately, as euphuism. In the exact sense of the term, there is very little euphuism in *Hamlet*, but there is a good deal of self-consciousness and affectation. Far from speaking naturally, as Castiglione had recommended, courtiers paid exaggerated attention to their style, and such a

rebuke as the Queen gave to Polonius must often have been necessary:

More matter, with less art.

To pick out some of the court affectations in the language of the play is easy enough, to recognize them all is, at this distance of time, impossible. But the more we recognize, the more subtle will be our appreciation of the play, and sometimes we shall gain a better understanding of the characters. Most of the verbal affectation occurs in prose passages. I will begin with a slight instance which might easily be overlooked. In Act v, Sc. i, ll. 89–90, Hamlet imagines the morning greeting of a courtier to his patron:

Good morrow, *sweet lord*! How dost thou, good lord?

From other evidence it is known that ‘sweet’ was a common mode of address in Elizabethan court language, and in Act v, Sc. ii, ll. 92–4, Osric illustrates the fact in his greeting to Hamlet:

*Sweet lord*, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

On the modern stage Osric’s lisping affected manner can easily be indicated by the voice and gestures of the actor; but to an audience of Shakespeare’s own time Osric’s language would have shown the man as clearly as his appearance. He is the very lightest of triflers, a ‘water-fly’ as Hamlet calls him on his entrance. On the tip of his tongue are half a dozen courtier’s phrases, ‘sweet lord’, ‘for mine ease’, ‘in good faith’, and the like. Hamlet scornfully parodies his style, indeed he outdoes him in affectation (ll. 118–26); then, in Osric’s own manner, coins the word ‘concernancy’, reducing the bewildered courtier to the monosyllabic ‘Sir?’ A little later Hamlet himself needs to be ‘edified by the margent’, but he keeps up the trivial contest to the end, quoting Osric’s absurd term ‘imponed’ against him, and dismissing him with a sarcastic mixture of ceremony and curtness. Even in the empty art of verbal affectation Osric is only a novice, whom Hamlet contemptuously foils at his own game.

But an earlier scene in the play gives a glimpse of Hamlet at a time when he was nearer Osric's own level. Already, before the action begins, suffering has raised Hamlet to an intellectual plane which no courtier in the play can even guess at; but when he wrote his earliest love-letters to Ophelia, his style both in verse and prose was not free from absurdity. I suppose no one imagines the four-lined stanza, Act II, Sc. ii, ll. 115-18, to be anything more than a piece of silly doggerel; the affected conclusion 'whilst this machine is to him' is worthy of Osric himself. At the present day, 'beautified' does not appear, what Polonius calls it, 'an ill phrase, a vile phrase', but it is difficult to judge of the past associations of words. The first example of this one quoted by the *O.E.D.* is from Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580), a prose romance in a style not much less artificial than *Euphues* itself. Perhaps the word carried with it associations of affectation, especially for the older generation to which Polonius belonged.

#### IV

But court conversation sometimes reached a higher level than the mere parade of uncommon expressions. Just as nimbleness of body is praised by Castiglione as more fitting in the courtier than strength or bulk, so, it would appear, nimbleness of wit was regarded as the most decorative of intellectual qualities. In the artificial atmosphere of a court, such nimbleness was often displayed for its own sake, producing paradox, equivocation, and other kinds of empty subtlety. We have either a picture or a parody of court conversation in the first meeting of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with Hamlet, where the notions of 'ambition' and 'shadow' are airily tossed about till the game is ended by Hamlet's cryptic sentence about 'beggars' shadows'. Equivocation is mentioned in Act v, Sc. i, as being characteristic of the court; and it is not the least amusing element in the character of the First Clown that his language is a parody of court conversation.

*Hamlet.* What man dost thou dig it for?

*First Clown.* For no man, sir.

*Hamlet.* What woman, then ?

*First Clown.* For none, neither.

*Hamlet.* Who is to be buried in't ?

*First Clown.* One that was a woman, sir ; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

*Hamlet.* How absolute the knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.

Hamlet himself uses many kinds of prose—it is part of his versatility. Indeed, his swift changes of mood and expression—as a rule perfectly intelligible to the reader or spectator—lend support to the theory of his lunacy entertained by the courtiers. Many of Hamlet's prose speeches deserve the highest praise that can be given to a prose style, namely, that it gives a perfect rhythmical echo to the mood of the speaker, without any trace of mannerism or artifice. Thus, in the 'Nunnery Scene' the style is one of reckless violence ; in the speech on 'this godly frame, the earth' it is poetical and contemplative ; in the addresses to Horatio in Act v, Sc. i and Sc. ii, it is perfectly frank, and therefore full of variety and sudden change, with occasional flashes of intimacy, as in

But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart : but it is no matter.

There is one scene, however, where Hamlet uses a type of prose different from that in any other part of the play. Hamlet is, among many things, a scholar, and in his directions to the players in Act III, Sc. ii, this element comes uppermost. Hamlet is here delivering a harangue, almost a lecture ; and though his language is full of personal and vivid touches, it is more formal and forensic than usual. It is, in fact, a piece of rhetoric, recalling Cicero in its deliberate use of the orator's devices. Here, for instance, is the tripartite construction which Cicero uses so much :

to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure ;

here is a deliberate climax :

for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion ;

here is antithesis :

Now this, overdone, or come tardy off ; though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve.

It is one of the signs of the vitality of this play that it bears its freight of literary reminiscence so lightly that the mere playgoer is scarcely aware of its existence.

## V

Apart from its prose passages, *Hamlet* is written in blank verse which on certain occasions gives place to rhyme. No matter of much critical interest is raised by the rhyming portions, except *The Murder of Gonzago*, of which I shall speak later. But the variety of the blank verse is immense, and deserves much fuller attention than I can give it here. Not only is the Player's recitation about the death of Hecuba in a style totally different from the rest of the play ; other speeches stand out in almost as strong a contrast. For instance, the passion of Hamlet's first soliloquy 'O ! that this too too solid flesh would melt' strikes on the ear with an astonishing force after the conventional style of the previous speeches ; while the soliloquy 'To be, or not to be' surprises us hardly less by its unprogressive flow and ebb, so unlike the burst of animation we have heard less than a hundred lines before :

the play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

These contrasts, however, are broad and obvious. It is by attending to finer shades of style that our investigation becomes instructive.

*Hamlet* contains great variety of style, but the effect is not one of chaos ; for there is a normal type of blank verse running through the play like a thread irregularly sewn through a piece of cloth, disappearing and reappearing at intervals. A good illustration of the difference between normal and abnormal verse (the distinction cannot be made with preci-



sion) is provided by the speech of Horatio in Act I, Sc. i, ll. 112–39. The first half of this speech, from lines 112 to 125, represents quite well the blank verse which Shakespeare wrote for ordinary occasions at this stage of his career. The style is much less rigid than in an early play like *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but also less fluid than in a late play like *The Tempest*. In this passage of fourteen lines there are just enough irregularities to give the speech the movement of freedom. There are elided syllables in ll. 114 and 119; and there are hypermetrical syllables in ll. 115 and 124—in l. 115 in the middle of the line, in l. 124 at the end. Caesuras are not over-emphatic or over-frequent; several clauses coincide exactly with the line, and there are no fragmentary lines. Such verse occurs at intervals throughout the play and is the normal verse of *Hamlet*. At l. 126 there is a sudden change. The speaker's agitation betrays itself at once in the rhythm of the line:

But soft! behold! lo! where it comes again.

Here there is a pause after *soft!* and a stronger one after *behold!* followed by an inverted foot. Then comes the invocation to the Ghost, punctuated by three fragmentary lines at intervals, and concluding with another line irregularly broken:

Speak of it: stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

To analyse the style of *Hamlet* throughout in this manner is, of course, quite superfluous; but to enjoy the play fully one must certainly be alive to such changes.

A short survey of the use of the normal style brings out several interesting points in *Hamlet*. There are certain scenes and situations in which it is predominant. For instance, the first half of Act II, Sc. ii, is pitched entirely in this key; when Hamlet is left alone at l. 128, the style changes abruptly, but the original manner struggles to reappear after the entrance of Horatio. These changes correspond exactly to the dramatic needs of the scene. The curtain rises on a court in which all are, for the time being, carefully studious to preserve appearances. Claudius opens the scene with a composed

and plausible speech written in the 'normal' style, and this tone is continued until Hamlet's first line (65). As yet there is no passion on the surface; ll. 65 and 67 are rhythmically smooth and almost formal. In his first speech of any length (ll. 76-86) Hamlet's style is not merely normal, it is conventional; every line is end-stopped, and there is a rhyming couplet at the end. The style of the speech suggests precisely the ironical demureness of the speaker's mood, beneath which such fires are smouldering. He can, when it suits him, speak the language of the obedient boy, lulling the suspicions of the world without, and feeding the bitterness of his own mind:

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

At recurring moments in the play, Shakespeare returns again and again to the normal kind of verse which I have described. The effect of its use may be suggested by Bacon's simile of the dark ground which sets off the light-coloured needlework. The changes of the verse provide a means of contrast more subtle and fluid than the alternation of tragic, comic, and pathetic scenes. Indeed, Shakespeare's dramatic talent is now far too active to content itself with so simple a method. The mood often changes completely within the scene. For instance, most of the earlier part of Act I, Sc. iii up to l. 87 is more formal in style than the latter part: in the first half, Laertes and Polonius both deliver lectures—the one to his sister, the other to his son—in a tone of calm omniscience: in the second, after the exit of Laertes, there is a change to earnestness in the mood of both speakers, and this change is accurately reflected in the nature of the verse. Compare the formality of the rhythms in Polonius's precepts:

Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.  
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, &c.

with the rising excitement of l. 90 and what follows:

Marry, well bethought:  
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late  
Given private time to you, and you yourself  
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:  
If it be so—as so 'tis put on me,

And that in way of caution—I must tell you,  
 You do not understand yourself so clearly  
 As it behoves my daughter and your honour.  
 What is between you ? give me up the truth.

Of these quotations it is the second, I think, rather than the first, which deserves the description 'normal'. The transition is from conventionality (almost undramatic in its low-pitched tone) to the agitation and movement of living drama.

It is unnecessary to pursue these comparisons in detail ; nor indeed could any one fix in words the Protean changes of style over the whole course of the play. It will be sufficient to notice some of the more broadly marked contrasts. One of the most striking is in the fourth scene of Act I, where Hamlet's speech just before the Ghost's appearance is in verse which is almost ostentatiously 'normal'. He discourses at length on the evils of drunkenness, its prevalence in Denmark, and the power of a single fault to tarnish a good reputation. From the rhythms and style of this speech, which with its involved parentheses seems to reflect a mood of unruffled deliberation, one might suppose that Hamlet's mind was taking pleasant holiday in the congenial fields of analytic thought. But we know, or we feel, all the time that Shakespeare is both prolonging the suspense before the appearance of the Ghost, and preparing to heighten the contrast in style as soon as the moment arrives. At the signal from Horatio—

Look, my lord, it comes!

the mind of Hamlet darts at one bound to the farthest verge of the natural world, and as there throng upon him 'thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls', he gives vent to his feelings of intolerable awe, in one of the most dramatically rhythmical of all Shakespeare's speeches:

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Throughout the play, similar contrasts in style occur. Sometimes the contrast appears in short passages. For instance, in several scenes of the first act, the self-control of Horatio is set against the hysterical excitement of Hamlet.

The effect is produced in part by the contrast in the rhythmical style of the two speakers. Whereas Hamlet's language is restless, excitable, infinitely various in rhythm, consisting sometimes of longish speeches, sometimes of sharp questions or ejaculations, Horatio's style is composed and deliberate, its characteristic form being the single line. In the second scene of the first act, he limits himself six times to a single-lined speech: a complete line, neither more nor less; giving the impression that he is neither garrulous nor hurried; a man who says little, but will say that little in full. In the short fourth scene he speaks three more such lines, and two more in the fifth. Notice in this passage from the second scene of Act I how Hamlet's rapid questions beat like waves against the rock-like stability of his friend's self-control:

*Hamlet.* Then saw you not his face ?

*Horatio.* O, yes! my lord; he wore his beaver up.

*Hamlet.* What! look'd he frowningly ?

*Horatio.* A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

*Hamlet.* Pale or red ?

*Horatio.* Nay, very pale.

*Hamlet.* And fix'd his eyes upon you ?

*Horatio.* Most constantly.

*Hamlet.* I would I had been there.

*Horatio.* It would have much amaz'd you.

*Hamlet.* Very like, very like. Stay'd it long ?

*Horatio.* While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

I will shortly point out a few other contrasts of style. Perhaps the most interesting are in the speeches of Claudius. Throughout Acts I and II he wears the mask of hypocrisy with success. It is true that he betrays some anxiety about Hamlet's madness in the eager rhythm of his line spoken to Polonius (II. ii. 50)—

O! speak of that; that do I long to hear,

but he quickly regains his self-command: in his appeal to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (Act II, Sc. ii, ll. 1-18), in transacting public business with Voltimand (ibid., ll. 59-85), and even in addressing Hamlet himself in the first act, he is

complete master of himself, plausible, explicit and—as we should expect in an insincere character—never striking the note of true poetry. In the first scene of the third act (ll. 49–54) Shakespeare lifts the veil for a moment, and we have a glimpse of the King's real thoughts, but it is not until *The Murder of Gonzago* has come to its sudden end that he utters them with complete frankness. The King's prayer in the third scene of the third act is one of the best poetic speeches in the whole play. If, indeed, certain sentences were taken out of their context, they might easily be supposed to come from one of Hamlet's soliloquies:

In the corrupted currents of this world  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law.

In this brief moment of self-examination, in this agony of enforced sincerity, Claudius rises above himself; he thinks and speaks, for an instant, as Hamlet might have thought and spoken. He does not attain this height again, though the pathos of Ophelia's madness stirs him to what sounds like genuine feeling:

O Gertrude, Gertrude!  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions.

The King, then, speaks for once in a strain of high imagination, in the manner of impersonal contemplation which Hamlet attains so often. And once or twice the Queen too touches the region of poetry, though it is poetry of a simpler kind as befits her mind and sex. Through the greater part of the play, Gertrude speaks like one whose amiable qualities survive, though with diminished energy, after years of self-indulgence and easy living. She has a great desire that everything should be pleasant and agreeable; and she has an instinctive aversion for what is painful and unusual. She dislikes the strangeness of Hamlet's behaviour, it interrupts the even course of life. Perhaps her motive in marrying Claudius was to continue her pleasant existence with as little alteration as

possible.<sup>1</sup> She wants Hamlet to remain at court and to resume his familiar ways. She addresses him in a coaxing, slightly plaintive tone, usually in short speeches as if she was scant of breath:

Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:  
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

As the action proceeds and creates cause for anxiety, she shakes off some of her lethargy. There is no want either of courage or energy in the manner in which she greets the rebellion of Laertes:

How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!  
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

By far the most poetic of her speeches, indeed the only one which is poetic in a high degree, is her description of Ophelia's death. One is tempted at first to question whether this speech is really in character. But the sight of Ophelia's madness seems to have kindled the most human sparks in the Queen's nature. She embraces the impulse to sorrow for her death, and there is the note of true affliction in her words at the funeral:

Sweets to the sweet: farewell!  
I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.

It is fitting, then, that the Queen and no one else should deliver the news of Ophelia's death. None the less, the style of the speech, except for the slightest touches, is quite impersonal. We think of Ophelia, not of the Queen; but we need not grudge the Queen her privilege of uttering this beautiful poetic elegy.

## VI

*Hamlet* abounds in great poetic speeches—in such things as the Ghost's revelation, the soliloquies of Hamlet, and the King's prayer—but it contains also a good deal of verse which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hamlet's allusion to *custom* in the scene with his mother. 'If damned custom have not brass'd it so', &c. (III. iv. 37).

is, at the best, indifferent. It is clear, of course, that much of the indifferent verse has a dramatic justification. Doggerel snatches of song are appropriate in the mouth of Hamlet, in his outburst of pent-up excitement after the success of his Play. Similarly, 'Aeneas' tale to Dido' (II. ii. 481, &c.) is obviously designed to form a strong contrast in style with the rest of the play, and in particular with Hamlet's approaching soliloquy: 'O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!'; and similarly, the rhyming couplets of *The Murder of Gonzago* are distinguished from the real dialogue of the rest of the play. But it must be asked what Shakespeare's intentions were in choosing these particular styles, one for the recitation and one for the interlude. Both passages raise questions of some interest.

Shakespeare's intentions in the rhyming couplets of *The Murder of Gonzago* are less obscure than they are in the blank verse of the Recitation, yet they are not completely obvious at first sight. The recollection of Pope's rhyming couplets is apt to bias the judgement of the modern reader as to the tone of the play within the play, and he may easily suppose that its style is more artificial than Shakespeare meant it to be. That it was necessary to make the Player King and the Player Queen speak in a manner different from that of Claudius and Gertrude is clear enough, but Shakespeare did not mean to make their dialogue utterly remote from reality. In several plays written within a few years of *Hamlet* there are scenes in which blank verse gives place to rhyming couplets for reasons of delicate dramatic fitness. It is true that such passages are usually much shorter than *The Murder of Gonzago*, though there is a scene (II. i) in *All's Well* which, beginning in blank verse, concludes with a passage of couplets which is longer. A certain amount of genuine feeling is not incompatible with the greater formality of the couplet. The dialogue between the King of France and King Lear (*Lear*, I. i. 257-68) contains an expression of real feeling, at least on the side of France, and the couplets exchanged between Viola and Olivia (*Twelfth Night*, III. i. 161-78) are emotional, at least on the side of Olivia. At the same time

neither of these dialogues moves the spectators deeply: the betrothal of Cordelia to France is a slight thing after her disownment by Lear, and Olivia's profession of love for 'Cesario' cannot be couched in the true language of passion. In the middle period of Shakespeare's career—between the date of *Twelfth Night* and the date of *King Lear*—a series of rhyming couplets was his dramatic idiom for situations which did not make a full demand on the spectator's sympathies. But the sound of the couplets was not a signal for inattention, it was a summons to the intelligence. The attentive listener might catch in the Player King's sententious sayings the dominant theme of the tragedy:

Purpose is but the slave to memory,  
Of violent birth, but poor validity;

and he would, I think, both recognize in the couplets the appropriate vehicle for the shallowness of the Player Queen, and sympathize with the various effects which they produced—scepticism in her husband ('I do believe you think what now you speak'), irony in Hamlet ('If she should break it now!'), and disapproval in Gertrude ('The lady doth protest too much methinks'). Probably the whole dialogue was felt to be more closely woven into the fabric of the play than the modern reader is apt to suppose.

The Recitation is much more difficult to judge. My views on this speech have changed considerably, and to explain what they now are I cannot do better than briefly trace the course of their modification. On first reading the speech at the age of seventeen I supposed, as other young readers do, that the whole thing was a burlesque of some bad dramatic style. The lines appeared pre-Shakespearian and un-Shakespearian—stiff, unmusical, bombastic. The violence of some phrases, like 'head to foot Now is he total gules', and 'o'ersized with coagulate gore' seemed to stand out in ludicrous contrast with passages of comic pathos, like 'the milky head of reverend Priam' and 'When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs'. I was not much shaken in this opinion by Hamlet's



particular praise of the speech, and I should have heartily applauded the comment of Dryden, had I then known it: 'What a pudder is here kept in raising the expression of trifling thoughts!' It was the opinion of Coleridge, with whom I could generally agree, that first showed me the real problem. 'This admirable substitution of the epic for the dramatic', wrote Coleridge, 'is well worthy of notice. The fancy, that a burlesque was intended, sinks below criticism: the lines, as epic narrative, are superb.' To this unstinted praise I am still unable to subscribe; but I must admit that the effect of the Recitation on the stage is different from what I should have supposed when I had only a reader's—only a modern reader's—sense of style to judge by. On the lips of a good actor, the Recitation does not excite mirth or contempt, and in one performance I have seen, that of the O.U.D.S. in 1935, it was extremely impressive.

Some light on the question how the Recitation should be regarded is again provided by parallel passages in other plays. The chief features in the style of the Recitation are: (1) the violence and strained exaggeration of word and phrase (including the use of curious or rare words, e.g. *mobled*, *bisson*), (2) the epic similes, (3) the use of the historic present tense, (4) incomplete lines. The rhetorical allusions to Fortune are also an interesting point. A striking feature of the versification is the frequent use of the sounded participial ending *-ed* (*couchèd*, *damnèd*, *o'ersizèd*, *unnervèd*, *arousèd*, *o'er-teemèd*). The general tone of the speech is barbaric and domineering. Now there are several other speeches in Shakespeare where some of these characteristics are to be found. In the Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* the style is of a similar kind, abrupt and cavalier. The vocabulary, which includes words like *orgulous* and *sperr up* is somewhat similar. There are two incomplete lines, and the historic present tense is frequently used. The style of the Prologues to *Henry V* has some of these features; though more magnanimous, it has a martial abruptness of tone; the audience is commanded to whip up its imagination and help to 'force a play'. Past events are put into the present; the sounded *-ed* of the participle

(e.g. *unraisèd, uprearèd*, in the first Prologue) gives the language a rhetorical sound. Once more, the report of the bleeding Sergeant in *Macbeth*, Act I, Sc. ii—a scene regarded as spurious by some critics on account of its unusual style—has features in common with the Recitation. Here again the tone is violent, abrupt, barbaric. There are two epic similes, a frequent use of the historic present, an incomplete line,<sup>1</sup> and even two allusions—one in the true rhetorical vein—to Fortune. Shakespeare understood his audience, and if he sometimes used language which to us seems turgid and bombastic, it was for sound practical reasons. His purpose in the Prologues was to rouse excitement and stir the blood of his hearers as quickly and effectively as he could. This, too, is the object of the Sergeant's speech in *Macbeth*, though it prepares the mind for darker deeds. The Recitation surely belongs to the same order of writing: it was sound rhetorical stuff, bringing tears to the eyes of the speaker. It does not deserve Dryden's merciless stricture, though it is not 'superb epic narrative'. Taste has changed, yet so good is the speech in its own way that it is still effective on the modern stage. The best comment on the whole matter is one of Dryden's: 'bombast is commonly the delight of that audience which loves Poetry, but understands it not.'

I must conclude without considering in detail the stylistic variety of Hamlet's own utterances, though on this point much might be said. For instance, the first act contains speeches expressed in the manner of a very young man, though in the fifth act there is nothing of this kind at all. Instead, most of the later speeches have the accent of one who is satiated with experience, and so beyond the reach of Fortune. Especially in Hamlet's narrative of the sea voyage, a new tone is audible; it is the language of one for whom life holds no new surprises in store, so that events which provoke Horatio's amazed 'Is't possible?' are recorded by Hamlet with a nonchalant mastery of language which half-anticipates Shakespeare's manner in his latest works. A thorough

<sup>1</sup> I do not include l. 42 which the Sergeant is unable to complete, because of his faintness.

examination of the style of Hamlet's speeches would lead to an examination of Hamlet's mind, a subject which belongs to another department of criticism. A close study of style illumines many small points rather than a few great ones; its more general value is to quicken the reader's responsiveness to the finer tones of the poet's voice. Poetry, especially in drama and epic, has its own ways of expression, and the best reader of poetry is he who by natural aptitude and study understands that language best.

BERNARD GROOM.

## THE FACILITIES FOR ANTIQUARIAN STUDY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE seventeenth century was a period of remarkable activity in the study of English antiquities. So thorough was the work of such men as Dugdale, Wood, and Hickeys that some of their books are regarded as authoritative even to this day, and others cannot be neglected by later students in the same branch of learning. Yet these men did their work before the institution of a national library in London, before the public records were centralized in Chancery Lane, and before the time of learned journals, bibliographies, and the rest of a modern scholar's apparatus. It is the purpose of this essay to inquire where the antiquaries who worked in those days could find the books and records which they needed.

From 1610 to 1662 the only library in England which could attempt to supply all necessary books, through its agreement with the Stationers' Company, was the Bodleian. This library was, and still is, a semi-private institution; but admittance was granted to 'gentlemen strangers', who were not members of the University of Oxford, after their request had been approved by Congregation and the oath had been administered.<sup>1</sup> The admission fee seems to have varied between sixpence and a shilling; a further sum of two shillings and eightpence being paid by English readers for a copy of the printed catalogue, with which foreign readers, however, were presented. This custom, which was discontinued about the year 1692, served the ulterior purpose of disseminating the catalogue. Thus the seventeenth-century reader who lived away from Oxford had an advantage denied to the modern reader: he could tell immediately whether the book he needed was in the Bodleian by consulting the catalogue on his shelves.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sir Thomas Bodley to Thomas James*, ed. G. W. Wheeler, 1926, p. xxi. I have drawn my information about the Bodleian from this book, from Macray's *Annals*, and from conversation with Mr. Wheeler.

The Bodleian in those days was not so helpful to the antiquary as it is to-day. Even if Sir Thomas Bodley's letters had not survived, the printed catalogue of 1605 would convince us that the original policy was to cater mainly for students of theology and the classics, rather than to make the library comprehensive. In spite of his librarian's disapproval, Bodley had ordered that such books as were admitted to the library should be distributed between the four faculties of Theology, Medicine, Law, and Arts, and placed in alphabetical order of authors, so far as their sizes would allow. It was soon realized that a catalogue based on this arrangement was an inadequate guide to the contents of the library, even when assisted by shelf-lists hung at the end of each press; so Thomas James, the first librarian, started to make indexes to the component subjects of each faculty, dividing each subject first into its component parts. For example, Geometry is a subdivision in the Faculty of Arts, and Geometry itself was further subdivided by James into twenty-nine sections. The subject-index to Arts—the antiquary's chief concern—was completed in 1624. It was not comprehensive. James intended the index to be a select list of the best books in the library on certain important topics, but the antiquary would have found that Chronology, History, and Biography were all included. After James had resigned his office these indexes were no longer kept up to date, and there is some evidence for believing that in the latter half of the century their existence was no longer known to the reader, who was therefore forced to rely once more on the exiguous help of the catalogue.

James had issued an alphabetical catalogue in 1620 and another had been published in 1674. But the position was still unsatisfactory. Hearne found that many books were not numbered at all, and others were numbered imperfectly; Oldys noticed that one author was sometimes confounded with another; and John Walker, who in default of a bibliography had read through the catalogue to find what books had been written on his subject, complained that the library had been considerably augmented since the last catalogue

was made, and that the transcriptions of titles rarely suggested the contents of a book.<sup>1</sup>

The Cambridge University Library, though an older foundation than the Bodleian, was not so well stocked—its agreement with the Stationers' Company dates only from 1662—and those 'two mean rooms', of which Evelyn and the German bibliophile, von Uffenbach, speak, do not seem to have attracted scholars so much as the Bodleian and the libraries of London.<sup>2</sup> The other libraries of Oxford and Cambridge were visited not so much for their books as for their manuscripts, which were jealously guarded. Two catalogues existed, one made by James in 1600, and another by Edward Bernard, published in 1697. Both of these purport to include all the manuscripts of Oxford and Cambridge, but in practice even Bernard<sup>3</sup> was of little use outside the Bodleian. When von Uffenbach visited Oxford a few years later, in 1710, he frequently found that manuscripts in college libraries were not numbered as in Bernard's list. Conditions were worse at Cambridge, where the authorities had co-operated without enthusiasm, since preparations were being made at the time for a local catalogue. At Jesus College, for example, von Uffenbach found that of fifty manuscripts only seven were mentioned by Bernard.

Even after a manuscript had been located, it was difficult to gain access to it. Complaints about unavailable keys and struggles with reluctant librarians are recorded on page after page of von Uffenbach's Oxford diary, and a German scholar called Grabe told him 'what prodigious difficulty he had had before they would allow him, as a foreigner, access to the manuscripts in the Bodleian Library'. But no college secured its manuscripts quite so carefully as Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where the three essential keys were kept

<sup>1</sup> *Sufferings of the Clergy*, p. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, Aug. 31, 1654; J. E. B. Mayor, *Cambridge under Queen Anne*, p. 140. But see Fuller, *Worthies*, 1662 (*Oxford-shire*, p. 327), who considered it to have lately 'grown the second in the Land'.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard's catalogue professed to include all the manuscripts of England and Ireland.

by three people, who could not always be assembled at the same time :

I went to Bennet College about the MS. [wrote T. Smith to Joseph Williamson on September 3, 1659], and stayed 3 hours before I could get together the 3 persons who had the keys ; and when they were come, old Mr. Dobson said he had to preach a fast sermon the next week, in a church within a mile of Cambridge, and till that was done, he could spare no time ; I begged half an hour, but he was obstinate and angry. Last Thursday, after waiting nearly as long to get the keys together, I found the MS., though with much difficulty, as they are not placed in the order of James' catalogue. I begged to borrow it into their master's lodge to transcribe, it being but 16 leaves 4to. They said this could not be granted without a meeting of the Master and Fellows. I asked what MSS. had been added since James' catalogue, to which I desire to publish an appendix for the whole University, but they told me Mr. Dobson could not stay to search, but I must return on Aug. 6 a year hence.

You see we have to deal with the dog in the manger. When Mr. Fuller returns, it shall be accomplished if either of us can prevail, but it is a difficult matter to deal with a Cambridge man about MSS.<sup>1</sup>

The most important library in London was that founded by Sir Robert Cotton at the end of the sixteenth century, which now forms part of the British Museum collection. Throughout the seventeenth century the Cottonian was still in private hands, though responsible people were beginning to realize that such a magnificent collection of historical documents ought to become national property ; and an Act of Parliament was eventually passed in 1700 (12 & 13 Will. III, c. 7) 'for better settling and preserving the library for the benefit of the public'. Fuller, who praises the library for its rarity, variety, and method, closes his account of it by remarking that 'what addeth a luster to all the rest is the favourable accesse thereunto, for such as bring any competency of *skill* with them, and leave *thankfulness* behind

<sup>1</sup> *S. P. Dom. 1659-60*, p. 171 ; G. B. Tatham, *John Walker*, p. 80 ; *Oxford in 1710*, ed. Quarrell, 1928 ; *London in 1710*, ed. Quarrell, 1934, p. 152 ; Nicolson, *English Historical Library*, 1714, pp. x, xi.

them'. The Cotton family's generosity in granting admission is frequently mentioned by other scholars, but access was more haphazard than if the library had been public. Anthony Wood went up to study there in 1667, furnished with a letter of recommendation to Sir William Dugdale, who introduced him to Sir John Cotton. Cotton received him kindly, invited him to dinner, and directed him to the library-keeper who lived in Little Britain. After considerable trouble Wood found the man, who agreed to open the library next day and lend him two manuscripts. He finished with these during the afternoon, but for another two days he was unable to find the keeper to borrow any more. This waste of time continued, until an old servant at the library noticed Wood's difficulties and advised him to return during the Long Vacation, when Sir John Cotton was out of town and the key was left in the servant's custody. Wood took his advice, and the servant locked him up in the library for nine hours a day, supplying him with whatever manuscripts he called for. Burnet's experience was similar when he used the library for his *History of the Reformation*. Cotton would not admit him without the recommendation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a Secretary of State, and this the Archbishop refused. But Burnet accidentally fell in with Sir John Marsham, a member of the Cotton family who had free access to the library. Marsham volunteered to admit Burnet and his copyist in secret; and there they worked from morning till night for ten days, until Sir John Cotton's returning to town prevented any further subterfuge.<sup>1</sup>

Though admissions might sometimes be difficult, Wood's experience shows that manuscripts were let out on loan. Von Uffenbach records that even the valuable Codex Alexandrinus had been lent, and that the borrower had taken it to Oxford with him. This may well surprise a modern student, but he should remember that the time had not long past when Sir Simonds D'Ewes was borrowing state documents

<sup>1</sup> *Worthies*, 1662; *Huntingdon-shire*, p. 52; Wood, *Life and Times*, ed. Clark, ii. 109-10; Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, ed. N. Pocock, 1865, iii. 19-21.



from the repository of public records in the Tower of London.<sup>1</sup>

The other London libraries were less considerable. Apart from the Royal library, the Inns of Court libraries, and the library of the Heralds' Office, all of them had some ecclesiastical connexion. These were the Archbishop's library at Lambeth, which consisted of 15,000 volumes at the end of the century, and where any one could read who was on friendly terms with the librarians and of sufficiently good physique to bear the intense cold of the winter months in a room over the cloisters;<sup>2</sup> the library of Sion College, opened in 1631 and intended primarily for the use of London diocesan clergy; Westminster Chapter House library, reorganized and enlarged by Dean Williams in 1620; and the library founded in 1684 by Thomas Tenison, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, to prevent his parishioners in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields from having a good excuse for idling away their time in coffee-houses.<sup>3</sup>

Access to the last three libraries mentioned does not appear to have been difficult. For admission to Sion College the recommendation of a minister was necessary, the fee charged being half a crown to the library-keeper (later raised to five shillings) and one shilling to the 'ostiary'. The hours of admission were favourable—8 a.m. to 12, and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., which was one hour longer than either at the Bodleian or at the Cambridge University Library.<sup>4</sup> Before the Great Fire, Sion College also let out rooms for students who wished to stay on the premises for a long period of study. By the end of the century it seems to have been recognized as the chief

<sup>1</sup> *London in 1710*, op. cit., pp. 122, 161; D'Ewes, *Autobiography*, 1845, i. 409.

<sup>2</sup> In this connexion it is worth noting that many more readers used the Bodleian during the summer than during the winter. My authority for access to Lambeth Library and the number of its books is H. L. Benthem, *Engeländischer Kirch- und Schulen-staat*, 1694, p. 65, a reference I owe to the kindness of Mr. W. D. Robson Scott.

<sup>3</sup> J. Evelyn, *Diary*, Feb. 15, 1684.

<sup>4</sup> *The Library*, III. vi. 204. The Bodleian was closed on 239 mornings and 185 afternoons in the year, besides Sundays.

public library in London, catering 'for the learned inhabitants of this Great Metropolis' and the vacation studies of 'the young Gentlemen of both our Universities'. To do so more effectually it was granted by the Library Act of 1709 (8 Anne, c. 19) a copy of each book published in London and registered at Stationers' Hall. Even von Uffenbach approved, though he hardly dared to touch the books for smoke and dust.<sup>1</sup>

At Westminster 'all the professors of Learning in and about London . . . had free admittance to such Hony from the Flowers of such a Garden, as they wanted before'. The words are Bishop Hacket's, and are drawn from his *Scrinia Reserata: A Memorial of John Williams, Archbishop of York*, 1693, p. 47. But other contemporary opinions were less favourable: Evelyn thought the library was 'not much considerable', and von Uffenbach, who mentions that even the newest books were secured by chains, reports that the printed books were few in number and of small account. John Bagford records in the *Monthly Miscellany* for June 1708 that the library was open every day 'in Term time' from 9 till 12, and from 2 till 4.

Owing to subsequent additions it is difficult to tell what were the contents of the Westminster and Lambeth libraries; but of Tenison's and Sion College one can write more certainly since catalogues of Sion College were published in 1650 and 1724, and very few later additions were made to Tenison's, which was catalogued before being sold by auction in 1861. Both were predominantly theological—though the Library Act of 1709 was to allow Sion College to broaden its scope—but both stocked books useful for general reference. Tenison's, which was praised by von Uffenbach as 'the most decent and well stocked of all the libraries that we saw in London', possessed a large collection of books about America, and such works as D'Ewes's *Parliamentary Journals*, Purchas, Raleigh's, and Speed's histories, and the writings of Camden, Dugdale, Fuller, and Selden; Sion College owned some

<sup>1</sup> W. Reading, *The History of the Ancient and Present State of Sion College*, 1724, p. 37; E. H. Pearce, *Sion College*, 1913.

standard legal works; and both libraries kept the usual dictionaries, and some catalogues of other libraries.

There is insufficient evidence to show whether antiquaries felt the need of a comprehensive national library, but at least one of them recorded his present dissatisfaction. John Evelyn had welcomed Tenison's public spirit in founding his library, and had reflected on the reproach 'that so greate a Citty as London should not have a publiq Library becoming it. There ought to be one at St. Paules; the West end of that church (if ever finish'd) would be a convenient place' (February 15, 1684). This project was still occupying his mind five years later, when he elaborated it in a letter written to Pepys on August 12, 1689: 'It is to be wished', he writes,

that a stately portico were so contriu'd at the west end of St. Paule's as might support a palatine capable of such a designe; & that every company and corporation of this Citty, euery apprentice at his freedom, assisted at first by a general collection thro-out the nation, a copy of euery booke printed within the Citty & Vniversities, did cast in their symbols for a present stock & a future ample funde. But this we are to expect when kings are philosophers, or philosophers kings; which I think may happen not in this but in Plato's revolution.

The example of the late Mr. T. J. Wise has shown that even to-day the private collector can rival the great public libraries. In the seventeenth century, when public libraries were in their infancy, private collectors were often able to surpass the public libraries in the number and value of their books. The Cottonian library, though the most important, was not the only great private library in which scholars could work. The library of the Earl of Anglesey was sold by auction in 1686. From the preface to the sale catalogue we learn that Anglesey had been collecting books both in England and abroad for thirty years, and that he would not stop at buying an entire library if it contained a number of volumes that interested him. In consequence he had amassed a fine collection of historical and theological books, to which scholars were allowed frequent recourse. Even more famous were John Moore, Bishop of Ely, whose magnificent collection was pre-

sented to Cambridge University Library after his death in 1714, and Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, who was amassing the important library which now forms part of the British Museum collection. An account of these and other great private collections is to be found in the *Monthly Miscellany* for June 1708, and in the preface to the second edition of William Nicolson's *English Historical Library*, 1714.

Even if admission had been granted as a matter of course to all these libraries, scholars would still have had difficulty in finding the books they needed, owing to the lack of catalogues. Apart from the Bodleian, the inadequacy of whose catalogues has already been mentioned, the only library which possessed a printed catalogue was Sion College, who published theirs in 1650. Conditions began to improve at the end of the century. Edmund Gibson, the Saxonist, published a catalogue of the manuscripts in Tenison's library in 1692; Bernard's courageous attempt to catalogue the manuscripts of England and Ireland was published in 1697; and at the same time the most urgent need, a Cottonian catalogue, was supplied. This task had been successively undertaken by Richard James, Archbishop Ussher, and Sir William Dugdale, but each had left it imperfect. It was eventually completed by Thomas Smith, and published in 1696, not without some hesitation on Sir John Cotton's part, who had told Evelyn that he would refuse to release the catalogue for fear of being disturbed. Smith's catalogue has now a peculiar value, since it is our only record of the condition of the library before the disastrous fire of 1731.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of sufficient library catalogues, the seventeenth-century scholar would have to rely more than a modern scholar need upon sale catalogues for the record of a book's existence: upon such catalogues as those of the Frankfurt book-fairs, the Term Catalogues of new books issued in 1668 and succeeding years, and auction catalogues. The first sale of books by auction in England was held on October 31, 1676, in the house of the late Dr. Lazarus Seaman, who had been

<sup>1</sup> Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. v; Spingarn, *Critical Essays*, ii. 323-7.

Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, during the years of Puritan supremacy. The auctioneer was a certain William Cooper, who took the opportunity of writing a preface to the catalogue to congratulate himself on his innovation, and to assure his customers that this manner of selling books had been conceived 'for the Encouragement of Learning'. The results were so satisfactory that Cooper conducted a second auction in the following February, and ten years later was able to append a list of seventy-four sales to one of his catalogues. These sales were advertised from time to time in the *London Gazette*, and copies of the catalogues, many of which were distributed free, could be had from numerous agents in London; some of them were also on view at the coffee-houses in Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>1</sup>

Cooper must have felt justified in his self-congratulations, for these catalogues were no doubt an encouragement to learning and 'not unacceptable to Schollers'. They proved the existence of books—Richard Lapworth, the London agent of a Devonshire collector, mentions in 1692 his successful search in an alphabetical register compiled by an 'Ingenious man . . . of most books and prices that have been sold in our London Auctions'. They could also serve as bibliographies, since they represented the collections which men with specialized interests had made 'to supply the needs of their work. For example, a student of heraldry would have been well advised to obtain the sale catalogue of the library of Sir Edward Bysshe, the Clarenceux King-of-Arms; and it is interesting to notice that their bibliographical value was recognized by the librarians of Sion College and Tenison's, who admitted several of them to their libraries to stand by the catalogues of the Bodleian and the Cottonian. 'Consult the catalogues of what hath been amassed and is dispersed' was William Oldys's advice, 'the better to know what we may inquire after and what is to be had'; though Oldys himself admitted in his introduction to *The British Librarian*,

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogus librorum bibliothecae viri cujusdam literati*, 1687, p. 33v; Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, iii. 608 ff.; British Museum, *List of Sale Catalogues, 1678–1900*, 1915.

1737, that sale catalogues were generally 'so short and defective, that we cannot often understand, by the two or three Words they bestow upon a Volume, the very Title . . . much less the Matter treated of therein'.<sup>1</sup>

Oldys's complaint was perhaps exaggerated in order to emphasize the importance of *The British Librarian*, which was intended to supply all, and more than, the catalogues could give. It was to provide for those many authors who 'are consuming their Time, their Quiet and their Wits, in searching after that which is either past finding, or already found, [or] in admiring at the Penetrations themselves have made, tho' to the Rind only, in those very Branches of Science which their Forefathers have pierced to the Pith'. *The British Librarian*, in short, was an early attempt at subject-bibliography. But it was by no means the first. Thomas James had compiled a list of Aristotelian commentators and printed it in his Bodleian catalogue in 1605. A bookseller, named William London, had published in 1658 *A Catalogue of the most vendible Books in England, Orderly and Alphabetically Digested; Under the Heads of Divinity, History, [&c.] The like Work never yet performed by any*; and in 1676 Cooper, the auctioneer, was at work on an *Alphabetical Catalogue of the Histories and Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland both Ecclesiasticall and Civile*. This manuscript passed into the hands of John Bagford, the book-collector, who told Hearne that he had lent it to William Nicolson, later Bishop of Carlisle.<sup>2</sup> Nicolson is said to have used this manuscript, which is now in the British Museum (Sloane 743), to compile his *English Historical Library*, 1696-9, a descriptive catalogue of all that had been written about the history and geography of England, the history of the Church and of the universities. Until this book was published, the historian's laborious and unsatisfactory task was to do what John Walker reports that he did before starting upon his *Sufferings of the Clergy*; that was, to read through the Bodleian catalogues, noting the title of any book which seemed to concern him.

<sup>1</sup> *Portledge Papers*, 1928, p. 148; *Memoir of William Oldys*, 1862, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> T. Hearne, *Collections*, iv, pp. 267-8.

This was supplemented by other methods. It was possible to advertise for material in the *London Gazette*, just as letters are written to the *Times Literary Supplement* to-day. Burnet advertised on January 1 and June 28, 1680, asking 'All Persons that have any Papers concerning the Reformation of the Church of *England* . . . to give speedy Notice of them to Mr. *Richard Chiswell*, Bookseller, at the *Rose and Crown* in *St. Pauls Churchyard*, that they may be perused by the Author of the First Part of that History'. Similarly Charles Goodall announced in the same paper on March 13-16, 1703-4, that

There is now preparing (and in great forwardness) for the Press, An Account of the Clergy of the Church of England who suffered by Sequestration, Imprisonment, Banishment, Death, &c. in Defence of the Religion, Laws and Liberties of their Country, and for Loyalty to their Martyr'd Sovereign King Charles the First. . . . The Nobility, Clergy and Gentry, (who have any Memoirs relating to these Affairs) are requested to send them to R. Clavel, Bookseller, in St. Paul's Church-yard with all convenient Expedition. Any Direction from the Owners will be observed. A single Sheet of Paper may be sent by the Post, but a bigger Bulk to be sent by the Carrier.

When Goodall relinquished his work, he handed on the replies to this advertisement to John Walker, who used them for his *Sufferings of the Clergy*, adding them to the replies he received from a printed questionnaire, which he issued to every clergyman in the kingdom through the agency of the archdeacons. Use was also made of the 'collections' of scholarly acquaintances, transcripts (that is to say) of books and documents relating to the subject in hand. Walker, for example, makes special mention of ten such 'collections' which he had been allowed to see.<sup>1</sup>

All these methods of amassing material were subordinate in importance to research in the public records, of which antiquaries of the seventeenth century were the first to make lavish use. Burnet commends Lord Herbert of Cherbury for having made 'a more narrow search into records and original

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Firth, *Essays*, 1938, p. 181; G. B. Tatham, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5.

papers than all that had gone before him', a commendation which could have been more worthily applied to such men as Camden and Selden. Selden mentions that for his *Titles of Honor*, 1614, he had had recourse to Chancery rolls, to the Exchequer treasuries, and to the registries of Canterbury and Winchester; he even hints that he had been searching the records at Dublin; and the wealth of his marginal references bears ample testimony to his diligence. 'My thirst', he wrote *To the Reader* of Drayton's *Polyolbion*, 'compeld mee alwayes seeke the *Fountaines*, and, by that, if meanes grant it, judge the *Rivers* nature. Nor can any Conversant in Letters bee ignorant what error is oftentimes fallen into, by trusting Authorities at second hand, and rash collecting (as it were) from visuall beam's refracted through anothers eye.' This was the spirit, as Professor David Douglas remarks, after quoting a similar passage from Dugdale, 'which gave to the historical discoveries of these men a permanent importance long after the theories built upon them had passed away'. It was the same spirit which animated John Speed, who for all his reliance upon the chroniclers of the sixteenth century is constantly reassuring the readers of his *History of Great Britaine*, 1611, that he has derived some piece of information *Ex Record. apud Westm. or Parliament Roll, 5.H.5. or Ex vetust. Cod.* Even such historians as Fuller and Izaak Walton, whose standards of accuracy and charmingly haphazard methods do not accord with the severe standards exacted to-day—even such men as these were diligent searchers of records. Walton's diligence is evident to any one who studies the *Lives* with care, and Fuller tells us in his *Appeal of Iniured Innocence* (p. 24) that his pains had been 'scattered all over the Land, by riding, writing, going, sending, chiding, begging, praying, and sometimes paying too, to procure manuscript materials'.<sup>1</sup>

If it was difficult for scholars to discover the books they

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *op. cit.* i. 5; Drayton's *Works*, ed. Hebel, iv. xii\*. I am indebted for this reference to Mrs. Kathleen Tillotson. D. Douglas in *History*, xx, p. 195; *Essays and Studies of the English Association*, vol. xix, 'Izaak Walton's Methods in Biography'.



needed, it was much more difficult for them to find their way in the confusion of the public records. Certain guides existed, it is true. Thus Selden appended a list of his sources to *The Historie of Tithes*, 1618, and stated in which repositories the records he quoted could be found. More useful, because more comprehensive, were the two guides compiled by Thomas Powell, a Welsh attorney: *Direction for the Search of Records*, 1622, and the more detailed *Repertorie of Records*, 1631. In both books Powell set out a list of the chief repositories, and indicated what types of document were kept in each. He also gave a list of the fees to be paid—one shilling for the sight of the Kalendar, fourpence for the sight of the record, eightpence for every sheet of the copy, and two shillings for the clerk's hand to it—and offered some elementary advice, such as not to lay 'bare hands or moisture' on Domesday Book, and when copying from it to 'write it as neare as you can, to the Letter thereof'. A more discursive account could be read in the third part of Nicolson's *English Historical Library*, 1699; and Strype's revision of Stow's *Survey of London*, 1720, contains a brief survey of those records which were stored in the Tower of London.

The difficulties in searching the public records were chiefly owing to the disorder in which many of them were kept, and to their wide dispersal amongst several repositories in London and Westminster. The degree of disorder varied between one repository and another. A committee of the House of Lords which was set up in 1703 to investigate the state of the records reported that 'a great Number of Rolls in the *Tower* had no *Calendars* or *Abstracts* made of them', and that 'Multitudes of Records . . . were laid in confused Heaps, and that if Care were not speedily taken of them, would be in great Danger of utter perishing'. The committee was renewed from year to year. In 1709 it could report that great progress had been made. In 1719 it found an orderly arrangement in the Wakefield and the White Towers, but the state of other repositories was still chaotic. For example, the Master of the Rolls kept care of Chancery records until such time as they should be transferred to the Tower; but it was

found that no transference had been made since 1674, and in consequence a vast quantity of Chancery rolls, some dating back to Queen Elizabeth's reign, were lying 'in a confused manner' in the Master of the Rolls's house. The same was true of other repositories. Star Chamber Decrees should have been housed in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey, but none were to be found; on inquiry 'the last Notice of them (that cou'd be got) was that they were in a House in *St. Bartholomew's Close, London*'. Nor were the ecclesiastical records in any better state, for John Walker reports that in the course of undertaking his *Sufferings of the Clergy* he was permitted 'to search the Papers at *Lambeth*, and among others of 'em, to turn over a very great Heap that were confus'd and unsorted, and seem'd to lie neglected on the Floor of an outer Room there'.<sup>1</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed account of all the repositories in which the national records were kept before they were centralized at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign; such detail will be found in the works of Powell and Nicolson already cited, in the introduction to Ayloffe's *Calendars of Ancient Charters*, 1772, and in the report of the Royal Commission on Public Records, 1912. It is sufficient to emphasize the labour involved in searching Exchequer records in four separate 'treasuries' in Westminster, records of the Courts of Law in their own 'treasuries', and Chancery records in one general and three subsidiary repositories in the house and chapel of the Master of the Rolls, as well as in the Tower of London.

On the other hand, access to the records seems to have been easy, and expert advice was readily given by the principal clerks in charge. Anthony Wood was well pleased with what was done for his convenience. He visited London in 1667, carrying with him letters of introduction from the Provost of Oriel College, Oxford, to William Prynne, the author of *Histriomastix*, who at that time was keeper of the records in the Tower. Prynne received him, he said, 'with old fashion

<sup>1</sup> Stow's *Survey*, ed. Strype, 1720, Bk. I, pp. 109-10; *Report of the Lords Committees, appointed . . . to view and consider the Public Records*, 1719.

complements, such as were used in the reign of K. Jam. I. and told him he should see what he desir'd, and seemed to be glad that "such a yong man as he was . . . should have inclinations towards venerable antiquity". He was shown into a room where he could work and see any record he pointed at in the repertorium. Here he studied for several days with Sir William Dugdale, who was 'running over a course of rolls' for the *Baronage* or the third volume of *Monasticon Anglicanum*. 'At 12 of the clock every day', Wood continues, 'they dined together at a cook's house within the Tower, and sometimes had Jennings [the Reacher of Records] (a boon blade) among them.' A companion picture of Rymer at work on the *Foedera* in the Tower, overseeing the transcripts of his four copyists, is to be found in the pages of von Uffenbach's diary.<sup>1</sup>

The experiences of Fuller and Burnet were as happy as those of Wood. Burnet, who had had 'no sort of practice in our Records' when starting upon his *History of the Reformation*, was guided by Bishop Stillingfleet and William Petyt, the keeper of the records in the Tower; and Fuller wrote gratefully in *The Worthies* of another keeper, William Riley, commending 'his care in securing, dexterity in finding, diligence in perusing' the records, and his 'courtesie in communicating such Copies of them, as my occasions required, thanks being all the fees expected from me'.<sup>2</sup>

But these, obviously, were accidental mitigations of a bad system, and of conditions so difficult that it is wonderful what good work our first antiquaries were able to do. We should also remember that they worked in a time of political upheaval, when Truth if they followed too closely at her heels might well strike out their teeth; and that they were pioneers, and were therefore compelled to devise their own methods. In these circumstances, only the most gifted could succeed.

JOHN BUTT.

<sup>1</sup> Wood, op. cit. ii. 109-11; *London in 1710*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Burnet, *Reflections*, 1700, p. 26; *Worthies*, 1662; *General*, p. 65.

## MILTON: 'THE LAST' POEMS

MILTON'S life and liberty were in serious danger at the Restoration. Disappearing from view with his partially written poem, he remained for some months closely hidden in the house of a friend in Smithfield.

In darkness, and with dangers compassed round  
And solitude:

The words quoted fit so exactly his condition during these months that they might have been written then. Perhaps they were. The poem may well have been half written at the time and these words stand at its midway point.

His life was spared—why or how is still something of a mystery—but in his existence during the years that followed there was indeed but little to excite the envy even of his enemies. His name execrated, his fortune dilapidated; his great work, the one thing left him, hampered at every turn by his blindness; helpless and dependent on others for the smallest services, afflicted by gout, and with no one to control his impoverished and disorderly household, here, indeed, was a catalogue of ills which might well have weighed down a more than ordinary spirit. But even this was not all.

Far outweighing [says Mark Pattison] such considerations as pecuniary ruin and personal discomfort was the shock which the moral nature felt from the irretrievable discomfiture of all the hopes, aims and aspirations which had hitherto sustained and nourished his soul. In a few months the labour of twenty years was swept away without a trace of it being left. It was the total wreck of the principles, of the social and religious ideal with which Milton's life had been bound up.

All he had worked for, in short, all he had hoped for, in Church and State, was gone. The Philistines had triumphed and the Ark of God was taken.

After a period of distressful fluctuation Milton's mind would appear to have eventually come to rest in the settled mood of stern resignation expressed in *Paradise Regained*.

His active and powerful soul was not, indeed, one made to acquiesce for long in feelings of despair or unavailing regret. But none the less there must have been many moments during his worst years, and a few perhaps even later, when his mind, as it brooded on the lost past and the hopeless future, was a prey to emotions as nearly resembling despair as his strong nature was capable of entertaining. *Paradise Lost* does not belong to Milton's post-Restoration period. It was in part at least completed at the Restoration and it was conceived long before. But the two last poems both fall within it; and in their different ways may be taken, it seems to me, as the true expression of the poet's inward life at the time, of all he felt and thought during the period. *Samson Agonistes* is Titanic. It is the cry of the chained Prometheus. *Paradise Regained* is all resignation. It is the tale of 'one man's firm obedience fully tried'. It is entirely both in the mood and in the style of Dante's well-known line 'in la sua voluntade è nostra pace'. The *Samson* on this view is the confession of his despairing fits; in *Paradise Regained*, on the other hand, we have the record of his efforts to attain a severe tranquillity. *Samson* is the most intense of his poems, *Paradise Regained* the soberest and quietest. All positive evils besetting his life find a lodgement in the *Samson*; the mere bareness of an existence stripped of most worldly goods finds expression in *Paradise Regained*. They are twin poems, as *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are, portraying, like the earlier pair, though on a larger scale, varying moods of one mind. There is, indeed, a world of difference between the two pairs, but it is no greater than the change which had meanwhile taken place in their author. The strong scarred veteran of the two last works,

his face

Deep scars of thunder had entrenched and care  
Sat on his faded cheek,

is a very different being from the stripling poet of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

Taking these two works singly I propose to glance for a moment at the *Samson*, reserving the important and enigmatical sister work for a somewhat fuller consideration.

The *Samson* is much more bitter than the *Oedipus Coloneus*, but like that poem it is devoted to memories and regrets. These give the tone to the drama, which is steeped throughout in the most sombre hues. Towards the close the denouement at last brings some relief, for it introduces the action, and action, whatever its nature, is less oppressive than suffering; but the action too is of the most desperate and tragic character. One very brief passage, one only, I think, attracts the eye by its brightness and serenity. It is perhaps worth notice, therefore, both on that account and because in a distant way it seems to suggest the tempered raptures of Milton's earlier days.

Wherever fountain or fresh current flowed  
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure  
With touch ethereal of Heaven's fiery rod,  
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying  
Thirst; and, refreshed, nought envied them the grape  
Whose head that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

Hardly a line in the poem but recalls something which the writer's own situation at or before the time he wrote gave him direct occasion to feel, think, experience, remember, or resent. All his public and private cares are woven into the texture of this powerful work, his poverty, his blindness, his helplessness, his gout, his obscurity, obloquy, his domestic trials, the lost cause, and the shameful indignities inflicted on its champions, the traitor, Monk,) so Landor says, Salmasius too, according to others. Nor are its pages entirely devoid of something like murmuring against Providence and its ways. Amongst its longest and most strongly wrought scenes is the interview of Samson with Dalila. Dalila we know is a bad and faithless woman, but somehow here she is not despicable. ) Indeed, no personage Milton represents as hateful seems to be ever despicable. (The giant Harapha in *Samson* is despicable but he is not hateful) It is in this scene, just after Dalila has tried to excuse herself on the plea of weakness, that we find in (Samson's fierce retort, its very first words, the dictum: 'All wickedness is weakness.' We have

here clearly the voice of the author himself; nothing could be more characteristic of him than this sentiment. 'Be strong, live happy and love)' the Angel says to Adam. 'Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable,' are among the best-known words in *Paradise Lost*. 'Suffrance' is extolled in *Paradise Regained* but with a qualification; it is strong 'Suffrance'. The quiet close has often been admired:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast.

But the messenger's speech, less noticed, is as good as any speech of that class in Greek; and, when the messenger in telling his story reaches the point where Samson pulls down the building, the words describing him in action are of quite peculiar force.

This uttered, straining all his nerves, he bowed,  
As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
When mountains tremble; those two massy pillars  
With horrible convulsion to and fro  
He tugged, he shook, till down they came and drew  
The whole roof after them with burst of thunder  
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,  
Lords, ladies, captains, &c.

There is a point half-way through the tragedy, just before the appearance of Dalila, where Samson reaches the lowest pitch of dejection which he touches in the whole story. The well-known lines will bear re-quotation here:

All otherwise to me my thoughts portend  
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,  
Nor the other light of life continue long,  
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand;  
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,  
My hopes all flat; Nature within me seems  
In all her functions weary of herself:  
My race of glory run, and race of shame,  
And I shall shortly be with them that rest)

These lines, in which the expression of absolute despondency is invested with something like sublimity, find an echo

in the words of a similar passage, hardly less striking, which comes in *Paradise Regained*:

To whom the Tempter, inly racked, replied.  
 Let *that* come *when* it comes. All hope is lost  
 Of my reception into grace; what worse?  
 For *where* no *hope* is left *is* left no fear.  
 If there be *worse*, the expectation more  
 Of worse torments me than the feeling can.  
 I *would* be *at* the worst; worst is my port,  
 My harbour and my ultimate repose,  
 The end I *would* attain, my final good.

(As regards the first of these two passages, it has been generally taken for granted that the sentiments are Milton's own; and the second is not very different. There was a limit to even Milton's indomitable energy and he was no longer young; age was coming or had come. It is small wonder then if, after all he had done and suffered, he should sometimes feel that he had had enough and would fain be out of it all.

Of all Milton's works *Samson Agonistes* is the one which has advanced most in contemporary estimation. A few critics, indeed, Mr. Belloc, for example, are inclined, not without exaggeration, to rank it as his strongest monument: Critical opinion regarding the merits of the lyrical and choral portions, which the eighteenth century considered a blemish, and which were something of a stumbling-block even in the early nineteenth, has now largely settled down under the influence of students like Bridges and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and these portions are now generally reckoned among the strongest features of the whole. The simplicity of the composition is in its favour with the present-day public. It has practically no theology and it is equally devoid of historical and classical allusion. Nothing could be simpler than the brief Hebrew saga which is its professed subject and a general knowledge of the main facts of Milton's life might be presupposed in the case of most readers. Whether for these or other reasons, the work now stands very high in favour with the restricted public that still takes an interest in Milton. Power is its leading characteristic. If it has little of the



superficial charm of poetry, scarcely any work could be cited which has more of its strength.<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Regained*, like *Samson*, has for its subject a scriptural story, the account of the so-called Temptation in the Wilderness; but the gospel story, while less simple in itself than the Hebrew saga, is also much less simply handled, and the work, unlike *Samson*, presupposes in its readers a considerable knowledge of theology as well as acquaintance with classical history and literature. These things demand some attention at the outset. We have to consider for a moment Milton's general intention, the way in which he carried it out, and the background of Scripture and theology taken for granted in the poem.

The general theme of the poem is the Redemption, the significance of the redemptive life and acts of the Redeemer. There is a well-known story concerning the origin of the poem to the effect that the quaker Ellwood when returning the manuscript of *Paradise Lost*, which Milton had given him to read, remarked: 'Thou hast said much here of "Paradise Lost" but what hast thou to say of "Paradise Found"'; and that some nine months later Milton handed him another manuscript, that of *Paradise Regained*, with the remark: 'This is owing to you, for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont.' There seems no good reason to doubt the authenticity of Ellwood's story, as Raleigh for example does, pointing out that the subject of the Redemption had in fact been treated and disposed of at the end of *Paradise Lost*. This is true, indeed, but Ellwood is to be excused if he failed to notice it. For, though Milton in *Paradise Lost* had in fact found a place for the Redemption, he merely touched on it in that poem and no more; a hundred lines is all he there devotes to it. For a subject like the Redemption, however, a full half and not the least important half of the whole theological scheme of which the Fall is the other half, this was surely insufficient treatment. Whether in view of this fact Milton himself felt that a further effort was required of him we cannot say, but it is the case that in *Paradise Regained* he in effect produced a work which filled a real gap in his treatment of the great scheme. The

celebration of Christ's redemptive mission is his purpose in this. But, though he has the whole mission in view, it would not be in accordance with his conception of the true nature of his task to give a direct representation of the whole. The course he actually follows is to present the whole as mirrored in a selected episode taken as representative and typical; and this he considers the only method practicable. In the *Defensio Secunda* there is a passage in which his guiding principle is clearly stated. 'The Epic poet', he there says, 'does not profess to describe the whole life of the hero whom he celebrates, but only some particular action of his life, as the resentment of Achilles at Troy.' Among the various actions of Christ's life which he might have selected, the one on which Milton's choice ultimately fell is that of Christ's first encounter with his destined enemy. This is known as the Temptation in the Wilderness.

The Temptation in the Wilderness is an earnest of all that is to come. Christ's life on earth is conceived as essentially consisting of one long struggle under varying circumstances with the same adversary, His constant object being to rescue mankind from Satan's hold on him, Satan's on the other hand being to maintain man in the state of ruin into which he had been brought by the Fall. The first act in this drama is represented by the scenes in the wilderness with which Christ opened His public mission. The two great adversaries met in conflict there for the first time. In the result the Tempter was foiled in all his efforts and the Saviour's ascendancy over him established.

In what has been said it has not been possible to avoid mentioning certain points of doctrine. It might be helpful, therefore, if, before going farther, we glanced for a moment at the general body of belief and doctrine into which these points enter as parts. What in fact is the background of orthodox historical divinity which the reader of *Paradise Regained* should know to understand it fully? It is something like this.

We have to conceive of the state of sinless security and peace which prevailed in the beginning as broken by two

great calamities, the Fall of the Angels, and the Fall of Man; since when the Universe has been rent in twain, one half belonging to the Powers of Good, the other to the Powers of Evil. On the Fall of Man the Fallen Angels, leaving their appointed place of punishment, passed over to the Earth, their new conquest, and there took up their abode. From the air round the Earth, thenceforth their familiar seat, they ruled the nations, Adam's descendants, and under various names and forms, Rimmon, Moloch, Dagon, Jupiter, Saturn, were adored by them. They are the false gods. The false gods were real and powerful beings. They were in fact the Fallen Angels. In the famous oracles which men consulted so reverently their voice was heard. The oracles too were real. They did not always speak truth, but that was because their inspiration was tainted, not because it was false. In consequence of these two original catastrophes Man lives in a fallen world, infested by Sin and Death, Satan's two main agents. But though all men are fallen, heavenly grace has not been extinguished in all, and in consequence there has never been wanting a select few who, in virtue of this endowment, retained some sense of their true allegiance and refused to submit to the dominion of evil. These formed the faithful remnant. A chosen people even arose from one of their number, a small people, it is true, but nevertheless a nation, who, though with many sore lapses and backslidings, still on the whole remained faithful and maintained the unequal strife, being more and more encouraged, as time went on, by the assurance that a strong deliverer and champion would shortly arrive to strengthen their faltering efforts, expel the enemy from his stronghold and establish his own heavenly rule. This great consummation for which all good men are hopefully watching and waiting has not, indeed, yet come, but an earnest of it we *have* had already. The Deliverer did appear on earth for a time and His sojourn, though short, was long enough to enable Him to effect in part His purpose—to rally the faithful few, to strengthen their hearts and enlighten their wills, to proclaim publicly His divine office as the son of God, to raise His standard and summon all men

to join it, to call on them to renounce their false fealty to Satan and resume through faith in Him and His merits their lost allegiance to the true God, and finally to survey the whole field and engage the enemy openly in battle at various points, the result of which at least sufficed to make it plain that when the day of the final struggle arrived the issue would not remain in doubt. His Church is the memorial which attests His presence on earth. God's chosen people are henceforth all those who acknowledge His name and power as revealed in Christ. The Church is the other Eden which Christ raised in the waste wilderness. But, while this is so and while the Church stands there as the visible monument of Christ's descent on earth, the struggle goes on as before. The earth is still the debatable ground disputed in the unceasing strife between the two great opposing forces. It is a truceless war in which there is no room for neutrals. No man can avoid taking sides. He that is not for God is against him. No good man but must declare himself and play his part. This is the Church's view and it was Milton's. The part *he* should play was not in doubt for a moment. He was on the side of the Angels from first to last. And he was a fervent partisan. He would have thought himself dishonoured if he had slackened for a moment in the fray, if he had not put forth every effort in his power against the common enemy, or failed to smite home at every opening as often and as hard as he could. He was unable to do otherwise. 'When God commands', he says, 'to take the trumpet and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast it lies not in man's will what he shall say or what he shall refrain.' And again comparing his own state with that of the prophet Jeremiah: 'His word was a devouring fire in my bones, I was weary with refraining and could not stay.' This *saeva indignatio*, the sacred truculence which Milton accepted for himself as a duty, we find again in all his warrior angels. We find it in Christ himself. It is the stern not the gentle Christ that confronts Satan in *Paradise Regained*. In the debate it is his duty to be firm and even fierce. With his armour off, however, he is different and recalls the gentle Christ of the Gospel.

In *Paradise Regained* Milton, I have already said, recounts the story of Christ's intervention in the great world battle and celebrates his victory. It is, however, a noiseless victory, entirely without the triumphant notes and clang of arms so often heard in the earlier poem. The action is muffled. The words by which it is ushered in:

and with them came  
From Nazareth the son of Joseph deemed  
To the flood Jordan—came as then obscure  
Unmarked, unknown;

and those with which it concludes:

he unobserved  
Home to his mother's house private returned.

are on the same note; and both in their deliberate unobtrusiveness reflect faithfully—and were I think intended so to do—the ruling spirit of the whole work.

Milton furnishes his drama with a time scheme; there is no trace of this in the original story. His action he distributes over three days—an afternoon, a whole day, and a morning. The debate is on the second day and begins and ends with it. The rest is epilogue and introduction largely filled with descriptive matter, where the strange simplicity of which Milton's style is capable has attracted much notice, not invariably favourable. The scene of the action is the dimly-lit half-visionary space called the Wilderness, which is anywhere and nowhere. The characters confronting each other in it are more than human in their universally representative character, and the drama has angels and demons for its onlookers and the Father in Heaven himself. The inward substance of the debate is purely human, for it is connected directly with the poet's own experience, his past life, and his actual circumstances, especially the latter, and its texture is determined by the views and sentiments ruling his mind at the time he wrote it. The supernatural setting, however, in which the debate takes place raises its character and makes it something other than a mere discussion in the Stoic manner on human good and ill.

Dramatic interest of the ordinary kind cannot of course be the strongest feature of a debate conducted between supernatural personages in such circumstances. But some critics go too far. They take it for granted that Satan knows that his antagonist is the first begotten Son of God. If this *were* the case it would certainly make a great difference. But it is not the case. *We* know it from two passages, one at the beginning and another at the end. The first passage shows us that the place of the first begotten by the side of the Father is vacant; in the second passage the fact is expressly stated:

True image of the Father, whether throned  
In the bosom of bliss and light of light  
Conceiving, or, remote from Heaven, enshrined  
In fleshly tabernacle and human form,  
Wandering the Wilderness—whatever place,  
Habit or state or motion, still expressing  
The Son of God, with god-like force endued  
Against the attempter of thy Father's throne  
And thief of Paradise. Him long of old  
Thou didst debel, and down from Heaven cast  
With all his army.

Satan knows indeed that Christ is the son of God. But then he himself is the son of God, all angels are sons of God, men too in some degree. What he does *not* realize is that Christ is the first-begotten, the very being

under whose burning wheels  
The steadfast Empyrean shook throughout  
All but the throne itself of God,

on that third day of battle in Heaven when Lucifer and the rebel angels were driven out into the deep.

This is clear from his speech in the council with his peers when he tells them what he had witnessed on the banks of the Jordan:

His first-begot we know and sore have felt  
When his fierce thunders drove us to the Deep,  
Who *this* is we must learn, for man he seems  
In all his lineaments, though in his face  
The glimpses of his Father's glory shine.

Granted then that Christ was a son of God, Satan had no reason to suppose that on that account he would be less successful with Him than he had been with the Angels whom he *had* seduced and who *were* also sons of God. Moreover, it is not quite clear that Christ Himself is from the first fully aware of His true status. Some change does appear to take place in His conception of Himself. He *leaves* the wilderness, it would seem, with a clearer and more settled view of His mission and origin than He had when He entered it.

This is only one of several points which might be cited to show that Milton did feel the need for dramatic reality and responded to it so far as the convention he accepted with the story forming his ostensible subject allowed. How freely he handles the story within these limits is seen by a comparison of the Scripture text with the scheme he actually develops from it. Whatever the meaning of the gospel story—and this is not without difficulty—the story coincides only very partially with the construction put on it by Milton. Milton's temptations are not in fact so much temptations as proposals for a desirable and distinguished career such as might quite properly be entertained by a young man of remarkable gifts and powers with the world before him and anxious to make his mark in it. None of these proposals are obviously wrong. They have all, therefore, to be earnestly discussed, and reasons, not always quite convincing, assigned in each case for their rejection. We know, indeed, beforehand *what* the decision on each proposal will be, that it *will* be a rejection; but the debate is alive and real none the less, because, apart from the intrinsic importance of the issues discussed, the decision in every instance is based on grounds of plain reason, which are fully stated and set before us and on which we are at liberty to form our own judgement. Here is the story given in the two Gospel accounts. The two are not quite identical, but any particular omitted in one is taken from the other and added to make the version Milton uses. For the order of the Temptations he follows Saint Luke.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. And when he had fasted forty days and

forty nights he was afterwards an hungered. And when the Tempter came to him he said, 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' But he answered and said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Again the Devil taketh him up to an exceeding high mountain and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and saith unto him, 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said unto him, 'Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve".' And he brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said unto him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee: And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' And Jesus answering said unto him, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Then the Devil leaveth him and behold angels came and ministered unto him.

This material Milton handles very freely. First of all he takes the third of these three temptations, and placing it outside the main action altogether represents it there, not as one of the temptations, but as a purely purposeless insult done to Christ out of mad despite and rage by the baffled Tempter. Nor is this all. The second temptation is also taken up and completely recast by the removal of the condition annexed to it. It is hard to see how without doing so he could have carried out his actual scheme or anything resembling it. Accordingly this condition is detached and treated as a mere parergon. Satan is suddenly overtaken with a wild mood of pure effrontery; and it is in this spirit, in an offhand way, and without any serious intention, that he makes the offer. This is not quite convincing. But Milton is in something of a difficulty. Having neutralized the awkward condition by detaching it from its context and being unable to suppress it, he has to find some use for it, and this apparently is the best he can do. Only two of the original temptations now remain, the first, that of Hunger, and the second, recast in the manner described by the elimination of the condition encumbering it. The enigmatical first tempta-



tion is accepted, as it stands, and briefly dismissed without comment. It is important mainly for the circumstances in which it takes place, of which a good deal is made, for the descriptions it gives occasion to, and for the fact that, inert and intractable as it is in itself, it suggests two other temptations of a plain concrete character, viz. the temptation of 'Fleshly Lust', which, however, is only suggested in council and not actually put forward—'Set woman in his eye and in his walk', said Belial—and the temptation of the 'Table in the Wilderness', in which the appeal is not one of mere appetite but of luxury and stately living. The words 'such was the splendour', with emphasis on Splendour, show the sense in which it is meant to be taken.

While those early temptations, two of them at least, are doubtless important in themselves—for no possible list of the temptations to which men are liable could well be complete without the two last mentioned—they are *less* important in this particular context. The real temptations in fact are yet to come and are on an entirely different plane. The early temptations are in the prologue; they introduce the action and lend it colour. They are important mainly for what they set in motion, for the speeches or descriptions of natural scenes they give occasion to. Description, for example, as in this passage:

Nor tasted human food nor hunger felt  
Till those days ended; hungered then at last  
Among wild beasts. They at his sight grew mild,  
Nor sleeping him nor waking harmed; his walk  
The fiery serpent fled and noxious worm;  
The lion and fierce tiger glared aloof.

Or again further on:

It was the hour of night, when thus the Son  
Communed in silent walk, then laid him down  
Under the hospitable covert nigh  
Of trees thick interwoven. There he slept,  
And dreamed, as appetite is wont to dream,  
Of meats and drinks, nature's refreshment sweet.  
Him thought he by the brook of Cherith stood,

And saw the ravens with their horny beaks  
 Food to Elijah bringing even and morn—  
 Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought;  
 He saw the Prophet also, how he fled  
 Into the desert, and how there he slept  
 Under a juniper—then how awaked  
 He found his supper on the coals prepared,  
 And by the Angel was bid rise and eat,  
 And eat the second time after repose,  
 The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:  
 Sometimes that with Elijah he partook,  
 Or as a guest with Daniel at his pulse.  
 Thus wore out night; and now the herald lark  
 Left his ground nest, high towering to descry  
 The morn's approach, and greet her with his song.  
 As lightly from his grassy couch uprose  
 Our Saviour, and found all was but a dream;  
 Fasting he went to sleep, and fasting waked.  
 Up to a hill anon his steps he reared,  
 From whose high top to ken the prospect round,  
 If cottage were in view, sheep-cote, or herd:  
 But cottage, herd, or sheep-cote none he saw—  
 Only in a bottom saw a pleasant grove,  
 With chant of tuneful birds resounding loud.  
 Thither he bent his way, determined there  
 To rest at noon, and entered soon the shade  
 High-roofed, and walks beneath, and alleys brown,  
 That opened in the midst a woody scene. †

On the dreamy stillness of these simple scenes follows the famous scene, perhaps even more dreamy, but in other ways how different, of *The Table in the Wilderness*.

He spake no dream; for as his words had end,  
 Our Saviour lifting up his eyes beheld  
 In ample space under the broadest shade,  
 A table richly spread in regal mode,  
 With dishes piled and meats of noblest sort  
 And savour—beasts of chase, or fowl of game,  
 In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,  
 Gris-amber steamed; all fish from sea or shore,  
 Freshet or purling brook, of shell or fin,  
 And exquisitest name, for which was drained  
 Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.

Alas! how simple to these cates compared,  
 Was that crude apple that diverted Eve!  
 And at a stately sideboard, by the Wine,  
 That fragrant smell diffused, in order stood  
 Tall stripling youths rich clad, of fairer hue  
 Than Ganymede or Hylas; distant more,  
 Under the trees, now tripped, now solemn stood,  
 Nymphs of Diana's train and Naiades  
 With fruits and flowers from Amalthea's horn,  
 And ladies of the Hesperides, that seemed  
 Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since  
 Of faery damsels met in forest wide  
 By knights of Logres or of Lyones,  
 Lancelot, or Pelleas or Pellenore.  
 And all the while harmonious airs were heard  
 Of chiming strings or charming pipes; and winds  
 Of gentlest gale Arabian odours fanned  
 From their soft wings, and Flora's earliest smells.

'Such was the splendour;' "'Paradise Lost" itself,' says John Bailey, 'contains no more intricately beautiful passage than this. It has been the despair and delight of all poets ever since.' These three are descriptive passages. Here are two speeches. Christ says:

Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,  
 Knowing who I am as I know who *thou* art?

And suddenly at these words, as if he had been touched by Ithuriel's spear, the old villager, dropping his mendicant whine, shows himself in his true colours and delivers the great speech the opening lines of which are:

Tis true I *am* that spirit unfortunate  
 Who, leagued with millions more in rash revolt,  
 Kept not my happy station, but was driven  
 With them from bliss to the bottomless deep—  
 Yet to that hideous place not so confined  
 By rigour unconniving but that oft  
 Leaving my dolorous prison, I enjoy  
 Large liberty to round this globe of earth,  
 Or range in the air; nor from the Heaven of Heavens  
 Hath he excluded my resort sometimes.

Or this in quite another vein of Belial's, 'the dissolutest spirit that fell':

Set women in his eye and in his walk,  
Among daughters of men the fairest found.  
Many are in each region passing fair  
As the noon sky, more like to goddesses  
Than mortal creatures, graceful and discreet,  
Expert in amorous arts, enchanting tongues  
Persuasive, virgin majesty with mild  
And sweet allayed, yet terrible to approach  
Skilled to retire and in retiring, &c.

Belial is still the same. The description given of him on his first appearance in *Paradise Lost* concludes with the words, 'but he pleased the ear'. He still pleases the ear. He has not entirely lost his ancient gift.

After the three temptations of the senses come the four noble temptations, the temptations of the mind. From the terms of the second scriptural temptation Milton, pressing heavily on the words 'Glory', 'Kingdoms of the earth', produces the three temptations of Wealth, Name and Honour, Place and Power, all, be it noted, used for good ends; and then he adds a fourth, a pure invention of his own, the key-stone and crown of the whole, the Temptation of Earthly Lore and Wisdom. It is all somewhat extraordinary. It is his own past he is repudiating. He had not been insensible in youth to the charm of stately living, he had enjoyed to the full in earlier life the advantages of Fortune, he was proud of being a gentleman and boasted of being *honesto loco natus*. As regards Fame, if any mortal had ever thirsted for Fame it was Milton himself. As regards Place and Power he had held office in the Commonwealth and rejoiced in the part he played in the counsels of the nation: 'I was no private', he might have said, in the words he puts into Samson's mouth. Lastly and most remarkable of all, he had spent the best part of his life in acquiring the very learning and wisdom on which we now find him so mercilessly trampling. No wonder Satan exclaims when the whole discussion is over:

Since neither wealth nor honour, arms nor arts,  
Kingdom nor empire pleases thee, nor aught  
By me proposed in life contemplative  
Or active, tended on by glory or fame,  
What *dost* thou in this world? The Wilderness  
For thee is fittest place; I found thee there  
And thither will return thee.

What does it all mean? Here is the suggestion which I should be inclined to offer by way of explanation. Milton's life at this time was pretty bare. Most of the things he imagined himself as rejecting had in fact largely if not entirely dropped out of it already. One of these was Greek and Greek literature. With Latin this was not the case; everybody still knew Latin, and to Milton himself it was a second mother-tongue. Greek was not. He tried hard to keep in touch with this great interest of his youth, and his daughter, who did not know the language, sometimes read it to him. But though this shows how hard he tried, it is difficult to imagine that the satisfaction he derived from a makeshift of this description could have corresponded in any degree to the pains it cost him. His hold on Greek, then, was largely gone already. Suppose it gone completely and suppose also that other things went more or less the same way. Bare as his existence already was, it might and probably would become still barer as time went on. Life is like that. The years, as Horace says, take away much and bring but little in return. What, then, if anything, will still be left when Time and Fortune have finished their work? 'I *would* be *at* the worst,' says the poet. Suppose then an existence divested and stripped of all or nearly all that men commonly seek and prize, would anything that was worth while still remain? If so, what would it be? And what would such an existence look like? It is not at all likely that the poet put the question to himself in this fashion. But it *is* in effect the question raised and dealt with in his poem. If the poem had been expressly designed to answer the question, it need not have been very different from what it is. In other words the invisible groundwork of *Paradise Regained* as distinguished from its avowed subject and super-

natural framework is a scheme of life ideally conceived as stripped of everything superfluous and reduced to the barest possible elements. The question virtually raised and dealt with is: How many of the currently accepted goods and pleasures could be imagined as removed from life and yet leave it worth living? And the reply is: all except three; Faith in God, God's Word, and the Holy Spirit lodged in the believer's heart for the understanding of the word. This imagined perfection of bareness Milton found exemplified in the Life and Walk of Christ. 'Afflicted *He* could be,' it seemed, 'and blest.' In pursuance of His divine mission Christ had deliberately embraced without constraint a way of life, familiar indeed, to men, but never or hardly ever willingly accepted by them. The substance, therefore, of the long and animated debate between Him and the Adversary is just the old question: What is the one thing needful? and Milton's answer is that given above. The virtues, too, which come in for notice or approval are just those which would best become and serve this way of life—Patience, Fortitude, Temperance, Trust in God, and Obedience to His Will. Patience takes first place, and Job, the great exemplar of this virtue, is referred to again and again. Socrates, also, 'For Truth's sake suffering death unjust', is a name of honour, and apropos of the Temptation of Power the man who by 'Temperance and Self-control can *reign* within himself and *rule* passions, desires and fears' is described as being in a state more than kingly.

The need of some explanation for the uncompromising way in which Milton in the poem expresses his views regarding the claims of Wealth, Fame, Power, and Learning, and above all for the uncompromising rigour of his attitude towards Learning, has always been felt more or less by readers, and the view I have just expressed has at least the merit of attempting to furnish one.

The Temptation of Learning, the last and noblest of the four, is embodied in the great vision of Athens. Probably no more magnificent eulogy has ever been passed on a city than that contained in Satan's description of Athens. Art

and Poetry, Philosophy and Eloquence, all that Athens, 'the eye of Greece', stands for in history, all that constitutes her undying claim on the gratitude of mankind, pass before our eyes in the vision. But the Saviour is unmoved: He will have none of it.

*The Philosophers:* Alas! What can *they* teach and not mislead,  
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,  
And how the world began, and how man fell.

*The Poets:* Yes! but

Where so soon

As in our native language can I find  
That solace?

*The Statesmen and Lawgivers:* Yes! but

The Prophets better teach

The solid rules of civil government  
In their majestic, unaffected style  
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.

and so on; the whole speech is in the same style.

John Bailey says that Milton should have been ashamed of the words he puts into the mouth of Christ. Professor Grier-son thinks there must have been some contradiction in his own mind. It was a contradiction which was not confined to him. It existed, if not so openly, at least in a latent form, in the minds of his best contemporaries. It had always existed in the Church itself. The Church never quite made up her mind how to behave towards learning; at one time she would pet it and again she would frown on it. Also it would seem that a strong hypothetical element enters into a poetical construction of this description. The postulates on which it is reared are drawn from the author's mind, but the final result is to some extent independent of it; he follows the argument where it leads. However this may be, there is no doubt as to where the argument leads in the particular case before us. We have to recognize that, harsh as the speech sounds to us, it is quite consistent with all that preceded. Milton's whole argument for the bare life leads up to just this acute contradiction between the Hebraic and the Hellenic Spirit. The contradiction in fact is its climax and testing

instance. To complete his case the lure of human learning has to go the same way as all the others—Riches, Fame, Power.

Before we pass from this matter, however, possibly one consideration which also seems to have some bearing on it might usefully receive a little attention. Something of patriotism or party spirit, call it which you will, may quite well enter into Milton's attitude here. The Hebraic spirit was uppermost in the country at the time. It was very strong even in the Long Parliament, in which the best and sanest elements of the nation were at first represented, and it was, of course, dominant in that great party which ruled it under the Commonwealth and which for Milton now virtually constituted the nation. If we remember this we shall find it less difficult to understand the controversial rigour of the views which he puts into the mouth of Christ. This is exactly how most of the men of the Commonwealth, not merely the armed saints and their leaders, who now stood for England in Milton's mind, but many more as well, would have felt. And it would have been exactly like Milton to identify himself in this way with the men who made him proud of his country and to think that what was good enough for them would also do for him.

Milton was above all else a fervent Englishman. He believed in his country, and in his early days boasted of belonging to it. His choice of English instead of Latin for his medium was itself a sacrifice on the altar of patriotism. It was in a spirit of ardent patriotism, also, that he planned to glorify his country by a great poem, of which the subject should be drawn from its early history—a design which he seems to have abandoned only when he discovered, after laborious historical researches, that this history was not real, that it was in fact a tissue of trivial lies and monkish inventions. He still believed in England, but his England now was the Bible England which had arisen out of the Reformation. It is Wycliffe and Wycliffe's early movement for reform he had in mind when in one of his early pamphlets he uttered the proud words: 'Let not England forget her precedence in teaching the nations how to live.' It was on this England



that his old patriotic fervour growing narrower and narrower, as time went on, tended more and more to concentrate itself. In his later days he was still a fervent nationalist, only his England was now no longer, if ever it had been, the old feudal Catholic England of Shakespeare, but the very different one that had developed out of it in his own lifetime.

It is hard for us nowadays to realize what the Bible meant to the men of those times. For two generations at least the English were the people of one book—the Bible. The common people knew little else, and all, gentle and simple, lettered and unlettered alike, were saturated in its lore and intimately acquainted with all the scenes depicted in the sacred text. It was the familiar background of their daily life. For it they had practically discarded their past. The Bible worthies naturalized on English soil had supplanted their own, and the names endeared henceforth to their imagination were not Henrys and Edwards and Alfreds but the Gideons, the Jephthahs, and the Joshuas of the Bible story. And it was all true. As Mark Pattison puts it, 'There might very likely have been a Henry VIIIth, but at any rate he was dead and gone, while Satan still lived and walked the earth, the identical Satan who had deceived Eve' in the Garden. The Bible story had become their own. Bible history for the nation as a whole *was* now English history. It is all very foreign to us now, but at any rate the age in which men felt and thought like this was far from ignoble or mean; Carlyle calls it the heroic age of England. The Hebraism of his own time, say what he might, was not, of course, the whole of Milton; but it *was* the whole, or very nearly the whole, in the case of Cromwell and the other great men who stood for the new Bible England Milton the patriot believed in and fought for to the end.

Two strains, then, might be discerned in the speech of Christ. While the voice chiefly heard in these words is that of the resigned and much suffering old scholar, formally turning his back on the learning which in fact he had largely lost, the other might well be, and to some extent I think is, that of Milton, the Englishman, the uncompromising champion

of the Bible saints of the Commonwealth, to whom he looked to anchor his country to the national book, and establish in the land an ideal polity, based on no foreign authority, however imposing, but solely on rules and principles drawn, like those in his own *De Doctrina*, from the text of Scripture.

We now pass to the style of the poem, a highly distinctive feature which no analysis, however summary, would be likely to ignore. But a word might first be said on the dramatic situation arising from the action of the two characters facing each other in the poem. How are these represented? The character of Christ is simple and self-consistent throughout, that of Satan less so. Nothing could be more impressive than Satan's demeanour throughout the greater part of the action, more especially in the opening scenes; but the irresponsible manner in which he afterwards behaves seems scarcely consistent with the gravity and dignity with which he at first sustains his role. The sacred character of Christ, it is evident, precludes in large measure the attribution to Him of ordinary human passions and sentiments. There were limits which the poet clearly neither could nor would wish to exceed. Indignation and vehemence, however, scorn, zeal, fortitude, are not incompatible with His sacred character; and these passions or virtues He accordingly possesses and displays in various ways in the course of His debate with the Tempter. But that is pretty nearly all. His speeches vary, indeed, to some extent in tone, the variations being indicated beforehand by some adverb which shows us what is coming: 'temperately' for instance: 'To whom our Saviour temperately replied'. 'Patiently', 'firmly', 'sternly', 'fervently' are such adverbs. The main thing, however, distinguishing His personality, as it appears in the debate, in addition to unshaken firmness, is controversial zeal. He seems to rejoice in the fray and His power in debate matches His zeal; not content with repelling the Tempter's offers He is represented as attacking him on his own ground and overcoming him in argument at every point. Confounded and outfought on the very field where he imagined himself strongest, Satan is not only foiled but humiliated. In all this there is clearly a good deal

of Milton himself. The controversial ardour which had consumed nearly twenty years of his life is certainly one very important side of his character. But it is not the only side. Of the rest, consciously or unconsciously, a good deal appears in his portrait of Satan. Satan, too, was the champion of a lost cause. In some respects his situation was not unlike Milton's own. Accordingly it is in his representation of Satan that much of Milton's own experiences and emotions, more especially such feelings as weariness, disillusion, unavailing regret, feelings which could not be known to Christ, find their expression. There is, therefore, at times in Satan's speeches a pathos and softness which we do not discover in Christ's.

I would be *at* the worst ; worst is my port,  
My harbour, and my ultimate repose.

Also :

Hard are the ways of truth and rough to walk,  
Smooth on the tongue discoursed, pleasing to the ear,  
And tunable as sylvan pipe or song ;  
What wonder, then, if I delight to hear  
Her dictates from thy mouth ? Most men admire  
Virtue who follow not her lore. Permit me  
To hear thee when I come, (since no man comes),  
And talk at least, though I despair to attain.

Or again :

Envy, they say, excites me, thus to gain  
Companions of my misery and woe ;  
At first it may be ; but long since with woe  
Nearer acquainted, now I feel by proof  
That fellowship in pain divides not smart,  
Nor lightens aught each man's peculiar load ;  
Small consolation then were man adjoined.  
This grieves me most (what can it less ?) that man,  
Man fallen, shall be restored, I never more.

In the speech which follows, Christ treats such language as mere dissimulation :

Deservedly thou grievest, composed of lies  
From the beginning, and in lies wilt end.

But this will not quite do. If it is dissimulation it is dissimulation that would deceive the very elect. The fact is

that Milton has put too much of himself into Satan's character and cannot take it back at will. The same thing had happened to him before in *Paradise Lost*. Satan there, as here, is the enemy of God and man. Satan is in one camp, Milton in another, and Milton does not forget it. He is, I have said, a fervent partisan. Satan is bad, but, if we look a little closer, we find he is bad with only a political badness. He is just Milton on the wrong side. For Milton the fact that Satan was not on the right side is enough and more; for us the fact is less significant. What we do see is that Milton in *Paradise Lost* has put so much of his own inmost self into his magnificent creation of Satan, he has fashioned the character so well and out of such sound and true metal that it is proof against even his own assaults. The fervent partisan cannot, though he would, undo the poet's work. When he attempts it a more or less jarring note is the almost invariable result. This greatest perhaps of all poets was in truth a very simple soul. Much as he talked of badness he did not really know it well. The creation of an Iago would be a task quite beyond him. His nature is not sufficiently complex and his mind is of quite another order. To his angels, we are told, 'descent and fall are adverse; in their proper motion they ascend'. In this Milton resembles his own angels. His *natural* home is the empyrean heaven, and even in his prose works his spirit and his style always rises, whenever he has occasion to think of the origin of things or the unstaled freshness of the world before the Fall.

The style of *Paradise Regained* has proved a great stumbling-block to many readers: they are rebuffed by its extreme simplicity and plainness. Can there possibly be any specific reason for this? One good reason, I think, *might* be adduced, and that is the style of the gospel story itself. The hero of the poem is Christ, the subject one of His acts. For this Milton's authority was the gospel history, as it is found in the four evangelists. It was his only authority and it was an inspired one. Now the four evangelists, however much they may vary in other ways, are perfectly consistent in one respect—in the way they tell their story, their style. This

style, as we all know, is a very simple, distinctive style, which never varies and is so closely associated with the person of Christ that the two are virtually inseparable. It is constantly present in any picture we form for ourselves of the Saviour. Here, therefore, was a factor in Milton's data which could scarcely be ignored. He could not afford to tell his imaginary story in such a way that his manner of doing it would be in too flagrant contradiction with that of his originals. If there was one thing he would be anxious to avoid, both as an artist and as a believing Christian, it would surely be this. This consideration alone might, it seems to me, account for the extreme simplicity of style prevailing in the poem, not so much as regards the tone of Christ's own speeches, where other factors come in, as in regard to the narrative portions referring to Him, in which the style is found at its plainest. On this view the general style of the poem would represent an attempt on Milton's part to adapt, so far as that was possible, the simple style of the gospel story to his own particular medium. It would be a faithful rendering, a transliteration into the Miltonic idiom, of the gospel language.

But granting that this was actually what Milton *tried* to do, does he succeed in the attempt? Many readers, Mr. Belloc for instance, think not. John Bailey, on the other hand, is one of those who think he does, and in his excellent *Life of Milton* he has some good things to say on the subject. 'A large part of the poem', he says, 'is as bare as the mountains and to the luxurious and the conventional as bleak and forbidding.' And again: 'Ever present as is its art, it is an art infinitely removed from that to which all the world at once responds and surrenders. It is not at first sight seen to be art at all. The verse which in truth dances so cunningly appears to the uninitiated to stumble and to halt.' Also in another place: 'And into this barren theme they [the poets] see Art and Nature, Ethics and Politics, Luxury and Splendour and Empire cunningly interwoven and Eden raised in the waste wilderness.† They see a style stripped of almost all ornaments, especially in the speeches of our Lord; the

poet deliberately walking always on the very edge of the gulf of prose, and yet always as one perfectly assured that into that gulf his feet can never fall. Here and there as we come upon such lines as:

I never liked thy talk, thy offers less,

we are nervous as we watch; but the poet passes on his way serenely unconscious of our fears, and in the very next speech is on the heights of poetry with the great description of Athens. Once only, perhaps, in the reply to Satan after the storm—

Me worse than wet thou find'st not,

we feel that the cunningly maintained balance has failed, and that the line has been passed which divides the severe from the grotesque.'

Even John Bailey does not seem to notice that we have here a touch of humour—the only one in the poem. With the morning, which is fine after a night of rain and storm, Satan appears again and opens conversation with some remarks, the bantering tone of which Christ just deigns to acknowledge and no more in the first words of His reply:

Me worse than wet thou find'st not.

I never liked thy talk, thy offers less.

Bailey seems to jib slightly at the word 'talk'. Milton appears, however, to have liked it; perhaps it was less prosaic in his time. Examples of his use of it are:

My noble task

Of which all Europe talks from side to side,

from a sonnet; or these two lines from *Paradise Lost*:

No more of talk where God or Angel guest

With man, as with his friend, familiar

Used to sit indulgent.

In the line above quoted the word 'offers' refers to what passed on the second day when all the 'offers' were made. What passed on the first day was all 'talk'. The Tempter then was just trying to be friends and no more. An old writer quoted by Professor Grierson from Raleigh says: 'A

reader of Milton must be always on duty ; he is surrounded with sense ; it rises in every line.' Among particular points that might be referred to to show how true this is are the following :

First this passage :

hungered then at last  
Among wild beasts. They at his sight grew mild,  
Nor sleeping him nor waking harmed ; his walk  
The fiery serpent fled, and noxious worm ;  
The lion and fierce tiger glared aloof.

The wild beasts, that is to say, in the presence of the second Adam are beginning to behave again as they used to behave in Eden before the Fall. 'Eden is being raised in the waste Wilderness', as we are told in the introduction that it will be. Again :

I saw the Prophet do him reverence ; on him, rising  
Out of the water, Heaven above the clouds  
Unfold her crystal doors ; thence on his head  
A perfect dove descend (whate'er it meant) ;  
And out of Heaven the sovran voice I heard.

It was a voice he had known well at one time and he recognized it at once, as soon as he heard it again. So, too, with the lines in Belial's speech :

Set women in his eye and in his walk,  
Among daughters of men the fairest found.

'And the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair.' Belial in effect here says that there is a strong precedent for the course he advises. The sons of God *had* been tempted before and the daughters of men were still as fair as ever. Similarly, when in the description of Athens he comes to the ancient orators, he does not actually name Demosthenes—instead, he suddenly lets you hear the thunder of his voice in the words :

Shook the arsenal, and fulmined over Greece  
To Macedon and Artaxerxes throne.

Most poets admire *Paradise Regained*. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and even Samuel Johnson thought highly of it.

Johnson says that if it had not been written by Milton, it would have received universal praise; and Matthew Arnold greatly commended the style. It was the style which constituted its chief attraction for Bridges and his friend Gerard Manley Hopkins. Landor, however, is an exception. Landor loved *Paradise Lost* and 'recurred to it incessantly as the noblest specimen in the world of eloquence, harmony and genius'; but for *Paradise Regained* he did not greatly care. 'In "Paradise Regained", ' he says, 'we have caught Milton sleeping'; and of the first book of the poem he remarks that the 'best lines are the last and all the better for being the last'.

It is a mistake, however, to read *Paradise Regained* with an eye to good lines; the value of any particular line depends too much on the context. Here is a passage, however, which Landor *should* have liked. If he didn't like it, he could scarcely have cared greatly for Matthew Arnold's narrative verse:

But now an aged man in rural weeds,  
Following, as seemed, the quest of some stray ewe,  
Or withered sticks to gather, which might serve  
Against a winter's day, when winds blow keen,  
To warm him wet returned from field at eve,  
He saw approach:

I think we have heard this kind of language before. Surely much of *Sohrab and Rustum* is in this very style. It almost looks as if Arnold had gathered some useful lessons from his study of a poem which, we know, he much admired. Landor seems to have been unable to reconcile himself to the fact that *Paradise Regained* was not *Paradise Lost*. But this is the very thing which in view of Milton's habitual practice he had no right to expect. An extraordinary thing about Milton which has not perhaps been sufficiently remarked is that he seldom or never repeated a style. To every fresh demand on his creative faculty he responded with a new form. At the age of twenty-one he wrote the *Ode on the Nativity* and with it entered for good among the English poets. But he wrote no second ode. The great ode is itself the only specimen he has left us of that particular style. It is the same with his other early poems. There is only one *L'Allegro—Il Penseroso*;



there is no second *Comus*—*Arcades* is only a brief sketch—no second *Lycidas* and, apart from the fact of the metre, the later poems scarcely resemble each other any more nearly than the earlier. Every poem is, as it were, a separate species represented by a single individual. The same characteristic comes out to some extent even in the sonnets. There is no sonnet sequence, and, what is perhaps more to the point, the individual character of these poems, even when the subjects are not unlike, is usually quite strongly differentiated, being determined in each case by a separate governing mood, to which the details are all subservient. Take for example a detail from the sonnet to Lawrence—an invitation to dinner:

Time will run

On smoother till Favonius reinspire  
The frozen earth and clothe in fresh attire  
The lily and the rose that neither sowed nor spun.

‘Consider the lilies of the field.’ The whole sonnet is an exhortation to relax, and the detail referred to means, accordingly, not that Springtime is pleasant but that Labour is not the only thing in life.

Only one thing, therefore, could have been predicted with safety of *Paradise Regained* before it appeared, and that is that whatever else it might prove to be, it would at least not be like its predecessor.

*Paradise Regained* as a poetical composition is dominated by two great features which largely account for its distinctive character. One is the almost ruthless self-restraint under which the poet’s imagination works throughout, the other is the unsleeping alertness of his sense of style. This is why nothing in the poem for all its plainness is prose, and nothing, on the other hand, however elevated, is ever in the air or off the solid earth. The style of the *loftiest* passages is not the *least* severely controlled, and the very plainest are still poetry. Nor do the extremes of lowest and highest ever fall far apart in feeling; for they are kept firmly in touch by a common element present in both—the general style. The language of the poem, whether it rises or sinks, remains true to the subdued minor key in which it starts. The quiet spirit

of the Visionary Wilderness would seem to have entered into it and rule in it throughout. About the visions, which are among its best-known scenes, there is something specially quiet and remote. The Banquet in the Wilderness, for example, distinct as it is, suggests an object viewed through the smaller end of a telescope. So, too, with the great nocturnal storm towards the close, which Landor praises; it is a storm, indeed, but a storm in a dream. The poem, in short, exhibits the influence of a single characteristic style felt in all the parts. And these parts shade into one another by almost insensible gradations of tone; there are no abrupt transitions anywhere and there is no emphasis. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the style of the poem is just merely the style of *Paradise Lost* subdued and toned down to the proper pitch. The style in *Paradise Regained* is indeed more subdued, but that is not the chief difference. The style itself is a new one. For example, the style of *Paradise Lost* in the later books, though greatly subdued, is still perfectly compatible, as that of *Paradise Regained* is not, with the tone of such a passage as this from Book XI:

He ended; and the Archangel soon drew nigh,  
Not in his shape celestial, but as man  
Clad to meet man. Over his lucid arms  
A military vest of purple flowed,  
Livelier than Meliboean, or the grain  
Of Sarra, worn by kings and heroes old  
In time of truce; Iris had dipped the woof.  
His starry helm unbuckled showed him prime  
In manhood where youth ended; by his side  
As in a glistening zodiac, hung the sword,  
Satan's dire dread, and in his hand the spear.

Or take a less highly coloured passage, for example, Michael's speech to Adam at the end of Book XII:

This having learned, thou hast attained the sum  
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars  
Thou knewest by name, and all the ethereal powers,  
All secrets of the Deep, all nature's works,  
Or works of God in heaven, air, earth, or sea,  
And all the riches of the world enjoy'dst,

And all the rule, one empire. Only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable ; add faith ;  
Add virtue, patience, temperance ; add love,  
By name to come called charity, the soul  
Of all the rest ; then wilt thou not be loth  
To leave this paradise, but shalt possess  
A Paradise within thee, happier far.

This, too, is different.

Or the last lines of Book VIII, describing the parting scene between Raphael and Adam just before the Fall :

Since to part,  
Go, Heavenly Guest, Ethereal messenger,  
Sent from whose sovran goodness I adore!  
Gentle to me and affable hath been  
Thy condescension and shall be honoured ever  
With grateful memory. Thou to mankind  
Be good and friendly still, and oft return!  
So parted they, the Angel up to Heaven  
From the thick shade, and Adam to his bower.

This also is quite in the style of the earlier poem. Subdued as it is and darkened with the shadow of the approaching Fall, its quietness is of a different order from the tranquil meditative quietness of the later style. *Paradise Regained* is by no means lacking in elevated passages, but even about the loftiest of these there is always something, I think, to remind the reader that their grandeur is not that of the older manner. Modern, W. P. Ker calls this manner, thinking of the earlier work. The style of the poem, less different from that of *Samson* than from that of *Paradise Lost*, is dramatic rather than epic. It is the plain monodramatic style of speech natural to a man tranquilly engaged in debate with himself on matters of the highest concern to his own existence and Human Life in general.

Wordsworth said of *Paradise Regained* that it was the most perfect in execution of Milton's poems. The greatest, of course, it is not ; the question does not arise. But there is a sense in which disregarding *Lycidas*, which is on a scale so much smaller, it *could* be regarded as the most perfect. In this connexion one is led to think of Jane Austen's *Emma*. The

comparison is not absurd. The very qualities of style and composition which made Wordsworth—and Coleridge agrees with him—think of *Paradise Regained* as so perfect appear also in Jane Austen's masterpiece. In each case a consummate artist, from materials which, in ordinary hands, would be nothing or next to nothing, produces a clean, rounded, perfectly proportioned work of art, with a quite distinctive character and life of its own, one and the same in the whole and its parts.

In *Paradise Regained* the single line is of slight importance. It is not indeed of great importance even in *Paradise Lost*, where the real unit which supports the movement of the narrative is not the single line but the long poetic paragraph. But in the later poem it is even less important. This is partly why *Paradise Regained* is the least quoted and quotable of all Milton's poems. Single lines or phrases are, indeed, sometimes quoted by critics; for example: 'Elephants endorsed with towers of archers', or 'The field all iron cast a gleaming brown'—lines which Mr. Belloc in his review of *Paradise Regained* picks out for somewhat grudging praise. These lines are picturesque and they are detachable; but that is just what makes them in *Paradise Regained* neither very significant nor very characteristic. As a rule a line detached from its context is left in the air with most of its meaning gone. The way to read Milton properly is to take him by groups of lines and try to hold the largest possible group in the memory at once. From four to eight or ten lines at a time is not too many. Only if the reader proceeds in something after this fashion will, so at least it seems to me, the full weight of the poet's meaning and the full volume and variety of his harmonies be brought home to the mind. While this is true of all three last poems it is particularly true of *Paradise Regained*. It makes special demands on the reader's attention. But just on that account it reflects all the more faithfully some of the inmost and most essential characteristics of Milton's style in its maturity. Milton had previously written much more grandly and splendidly than he writes in *Paradise Regained*. The magnificence and beauty of *Paradise Lost* in

the earlier books are openly displayed, and could hardly be missed by any eye. But Milton, it has been well said, is nowhere more Miltonic than he is in *Paradise Regained*. We have his style here in its quietest, its most private, and intimate guise. The key to all its secrets is in *Paradise Regained*. We might sum up the matter by saying that, if it is true that *Lycidas*, as has been asserted, is the touchstone of poetic taste in general, *Paradise Regained* might, with almost equal justice, be taken as the touchstone of a fully developed taste for Milton's own style, as it is exhibited in the three poems of his maturity.

W. MENZIES.

## SCOTT AND SHAKESPEARE

IT annoyed Scott to be compared to Shakespeare. 'The blockheads,' he writes in his *Journal*, 'the blockheads talk of my being like Shakespeare: not fit to tie his brogues.' We do not rate Scott so high to-day as his contemporaries did; we would not pit him against Shakespeare as some of them seem to have done; but still the feeling persists—Sir Herbert Grierson expresses it again and again in his new *Life of Scott*—that Scott, though not a second Shakespeare, was unmistakably of Shakespeare's kin.<sup>1</sup> The comparison, however, though often made, has never been drawn out in detail; if I attempt to do so now, it is chiefly for the pleasure of setting these two side by side, but partly also in the hope that, as we turn from one to the other, our abundant knowledge of Scott, now enriched by the publication of his letters, may be so used as to add a little to our meagre knowledge of Shakespeare.

There are three current heresies about Shakespeare. There is the impersonal, unguessed-at Shakespeare of Arnold's sonnet:

Others abide our question. Thou art free.

Sir Sidney Lee put it more bluntly. He reminded us that Shakespeare was a working playwright, writing with a steady eye on the box-office receipts, in which as 'sharer' and 'householder' he had a substantial interest. On this view all Dowden's talk about tragic periods and romantic periods, 'out of the depths' and 'on the heights', is moonshine. Shakespeare did not write tragedies when he was sad and comedies when he was merry. He had his living to make. If at one point he turned from comedy to problem-play it was because Ben Jonson had beaten him at comedy, just as Scott took

<sup>1</sup> For all his disclaimers Scott can scarcely have been unconscious of his affinity with Shakespeare any more than Keats was. His mind was steeped in Shakespeare. When he wanted a phrase for something strongly felt, he found it in Shakespeare or in Burns. There are 126 Shakespearian quotations in the *Journal*.

to novel-writing when Byron 'bet' him at narrative verse. If later he turned from tragedy to romance he was simply following the new fashion set by Beaumont and Fletcher. In a word, you cannot argue from the plays to the personal life of the playwright.

The opposite view was most stridently voiced by the late Frank Harris. To him the successive plays are so many chapters in Shakespeare's autobiography. He is Biron, he is Romeo, he is Jaques—Hamlet—Timon—Macbeth—Prospero. Combine these and you get a composite photograph which is the authentic Shakespeare.

The third heresy is on a higher plane. Those who hold it, so far as I understand them, conceive of Shakespeare as a pure embodiment of creative genius, evolving as a plant evolves in obedience to the law of its own nature and independent of external stimuli, 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear', so that having written *Twelfth Night* he must inevitably go on to write *Hamlet*, and having written *Hamlet* must go on to *Othello*. (It might disconcert these theorists for a moment if they found that *Hamlet* was in fact written before *Twelfth Night*; but I dare say the theory could be readjusted to suit.)

There are grains of truth in all these heresies, and my hope is that comparison with Scott may help us to sift them out.

Physically, indeed, the two men were not at all alike. Except for the long upper lip and lofty forehead there is no resemblance between Scott's shaggy, heavy-lidded, sagacious countenance and the bland smoothness of the Stratford bust. Nor were they alike in build. Infantile paralysis left Scott lame; otherwise he was an exceptionally powerful man—tall, deep-chested (Dr. Watson described his torso as 'colossal'), so strong in the arm that he could lift a blacksmith's anvil by the horn, capable in spite of his lameness of great bodily exertion on moor and river, a hearty eater and drinker, and at times a heavy smoker. In his *Journal* he recalls the spirit 'that, in spite of manifold infirmities' [meaning his lameness], 'made me a roaring boy in my youth, a desperate climber, a bold rider, a deep drinker, and a stout

player at singlestick'. It is an odd fact that Shakespeare in the *Sonnets* three times speaks of himself as lame:

So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite. (xxxvii.)

So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised. (ibid.)

Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt. (lxxxix.)

If we could take this lameness literally it would make a singular bond between him and Scott; but most scholars think it figurative. Be that as it may, Shakespeare was 'a handsome, well-shapt man' by Aubrey's account, but no one would have called his torso colossal: the Stratford bust shows a man of medium height, inclining to portliness, but not burly. In his youth he too must have been a bit of a 'roaring boy', if the deer-stealing story is true; but in later life there is some reason to think that his health was rather delicate. Aubrey, who describes him as 'a handsome, well-shapt man', adds that he was 'not a company-keeper; wouldn't be debauched, and if invited to writ: he was in pain'. We must not make too much of this. It does not mean that Shakespeare was a chronic invalid. In the first instance it probably meant no more than that he avoided an unwelcome carouse on the plea of indisposition. But the significant thing is that he made a practice of this—he 'wouldn't be debauched'.

It may be thought that these physical differences are of no importance in comparing two men of genius. Scott was not of that opinion. He believed—and surely he was right—that bodily strength had a great effect on the mind and temper. The hint of delicacy which Aubrey conveys seems to indicate a constitution more finely organized than Scott's, less robust, less equal to the demands of a too convivial society, but capable of being touched to finer issues. I pass to traits other than physical.

The invaluable Aubrey informs us that Shakespeare was 'very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit'. Scott was very good company too, overflowing with anecdote and reminiscence; but his conversation, though full of humour, was scarcely witty in the ordinary sense, certainly not with that verbal wit of which Shake-



speare was rather too fond. There is a pleasant, if poorly authenticated, story about Shakespeare's father, 'a merry-cheeked old man', who is said to have said 'that Will was a good honest fellow, but he durst crack a joke with him any day'. Old Mr. Scott could enjoy a jest too, in season, though his favourite recreation was funerals; but we can scarcely imagine him boasting that he 'durst crack a joke with Wattie'. Walter was a dutiful son, but the two were not on that familiar footing. It was Scott's mother who had his confidence and gave him his taste for polite letters.

Ben Jonson twice calls Shakespeare 'gentle', and the epithet now comes naturally to our lips. Scott, too, was a gentleman in every sense: when Shortreed describes their raids into Liddesdale and mighty carousals with the farmers there, he is careful to add, 'Drunk or sober, he was aye the gentleman'. If, nevertheless, no brother poet addresses him as 'My gentle Scott', as Jonson says 'My gentle Shakespeare', the reason perhaps is that the adjective, though not the noun, has taken on a hint of softness that it did not have in Jonson's day.

The eulogy prefixed to the First Folio is dedicated by Jonson 'To the memory of my beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare'; and in his rather censorious *Discoveries* he says again, 'I lov'd the man . . . He was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature'. It is significant that these are precisely the epithets which Iago applies to Othello:

The Moor is of a free and open nature,

That thinks men honest that but seem to be so.

'Free', 'open', 'honest': well, Scott was honest and free: indeed, if 'free' means 'generous' he was the freest of men, not merely benevolent but beneficent, a man who took endless pains to do good. Once, when he thought himself dying, he called his children round his bed and told them for their comfort that he had never wittingly done any man an ill turn, or omitted any reasonable opportunity of doing a good one. He spoke no more than the truth, as his letters show by countless instances.

Honest, then, he was, and free; but I dare scarcely claim that he was open. I am thinking not so much of his concealment

of the authorship of *Waverley* as of his secret partnership with the Ballantynes, which led him into such ambiguous situations and finally ruined him. There was a strain of reticence, of reserve, in Scott which served him ill in that affair and yet was bound up with the stubborn pride which he inherited from his Border ancestors and which braced him to face ruin with matchless fortitude. And this brings me to what I cannot but regard as the most striking of all Scott's characteristics—his prodigious strength of will. There is a revealing passage in *The Lady of the Lake* which deserves the attention of the psycho-analysts. Fitz-James starts up from a fevered dream of love and terror: in the calm moonlight he regains self-control, and declares:

I'll dream no more ; by manly mind  
Not even in sleep is will resigned.  
My midnight orisons said o'er,  
I'll turn to rest and dream no more.

And so, having prayed, he

Consigned to Heaven his cares and woes,  
And sunk in undisturbed repose.

In these lines you hear Scott's authentic voice. This was the ideal of self-mastery that he set before him. It was Shakespeare's ideal too: the man he admired was the man 'who is not passion's slave', 'unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow'.

Scott's manly mind never showed to such advantage as in his last years, when he scorned the easy escape of bankruptcy and, failing in mind and body, still held himself doggedly to his gigantic task. This form of self-mastery, the power of holding himself to a task, owed something to his apprenticeship in his father's office. It was there that he acquired method and learned to endure drudgery. Shakespeare, too, had immense powers of work; when working at full pressure his voltage was far higher than Scott's; yet one doubts if he could have sat down at his desk by six o'clock every morning, with all his papers neatly set out and his books of reference methodically arranged around him, and put in five hours of solid work by noon, for weeks on end, as Scott habitually did

in the country. On the contrary, there is some reason to think that Shakespeare worked by fits and starts. Ben Jonson says that he knew a man who 'knew no mean either to intermit his studies or call upon them again. When he hath set himself to writing, he would join night to day, press upon himself without release, not minding it till he fainted; and when he left off, resolve himself to all sports and looseness again'. (By 'looseness' Jonson means simply 'relaxation'.) Is he referring to Shakespeare? Certainly much of Shakespeare's work reads as if it had been written like that. The plays vary widely in point of execution. In a play like *Hamlet*, which he 'kept on his easel', the execution is remarkably uniform throughout: other plays seem to have been written if not at one stroke yet at three or four—a slow, uninspired start; a burst of glowing speed (with occasional *longueurs* in some plays); an impatient, huddled-up finish. Even so, we may argue that the difference between Scott's method and Shakespeare's—assuming that Jonson did mean Shakespeare—is more apparent than real. On the one hand, we shall say, the 'looseness' of which Jonson speaks may have been merely the prelude to a fresh incubation; on the other, we know that Scott's preprandial desk-work did not represent all the time he gave to composition properly so called. We know more of his methods now than we had learned from Lockhart. For instance, Lockhart tells us that Scott began to write *The Antiquary* about Christmas 1815. True he began to *write* it then; but we know now that *The Antiquary* had been planned, and even named, nearly a year before. The spring and summer of 1815 were taken up with Scott's visits to London, to Waterloo, and Paris, and the writing of *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*. But all the while *The Antiquary* was hatching out in his brain; and it was this long incubation that enabled him, when once *Paul's Letters* were off his hands, to square his elbows and call exultantly to James Ballantyne:

Dear James—I'm done, thank God, with the long yarns  
Of the most prosy of apostles—Paul;  
And now advance, sweet Heathen of Monkbarns!  
Step out old quizz, as fast as I can scrawl.

A novel takes longer to scrawl than a play, but it need not take so long to incubate, since the novelist can leave much to the spur of the moment which the playwright must think out in advance. Lengthy incubation, high-pressure execution—some such formula fits much of Shakespeare's work. We need not disbelieve his first editors when they say that they had scarce received from him a blot (i.e. a correction) in his papers. There are not many blots in Scott's papers either: he wrote his poems twice, but his novels only once.

Scott's way of writing throws light on Shakespeare's at some other points. If Scott liked 'a pirn to wind his yarn on', Shakespeare too borrowed most of his plots. Scott's characters often ran away with him, so that he did not know what they would do or say next: the same thing sometimes happened to Shakespeare; he meant to go one way, but Falstaff and Shylock took another. Again, Scott often drew from the life; indeed the more we know of him and his circle the more often do we find that what we took for invention was really memory. Dogberry is the only Shakespearian character whom we know to have been drawn from the life—he took it, Aubrey says, at Grendon in Bucks.; but there are other minor characters which look like caricatures of living originals: Nym and Pistol must have been 'taken' from among the riff-raff of the Bankside. Among serious characters Casca is an example of a character individualized *praeter necessitatem*; his part in the action is insignificant, yet we have as clear a picture of him as we have of Brutus himself. Except in such minor instances Shakespeare did not draw his characters 'from the skin inwards'. But neither did Scott, for all Carlyle may say. The real difference between them is that Shakespeare understood himself as Scott never did. The person from whom Scott drew most frequently was Walter Scott; and we all feel that Shakespeare put something of himself into such characters as Jaques and much of himself into Hamlet. Finally Scott's immense productivity has led some people to think that several of his novels must have been written long before they were published. In the case of *The Monastery* and *Redgauntlet*, two of the novels

pitched on as early, this theory is disproved by the water-marks in the paper of Scott's autographs—a fact which may give pause to those chorizontes who cry 'early' or 'alien' whenever Shakespeare falls below himself.

To return to personal characteristics: 'It is clear to me', says Scott, 'that what is least forgiven in a man of any mark or likelihood is want of that article blackguardly called *pluck*.' Scott never wanted pluck, and in his old age he had an odd occasion to show it. In 1827 he prepared to fight a duel! General Gourgaud took offence at some observations in Scott's *Napoleon* and came over to England breathing fire and slaughter. Scott prepared to meet him *sur le terrain*, almost glad, it seems, of such a vent to the many irritations with which his mind was seething. But nothing came of it: the furious Frank got no farther north than London. Shakespeare wore a sword himself and presumably could use it; but till the other day we had no evidence of his pugnacity. Recently, however, a document came to light in the Record Office which shows us 'a certain loose person of no reckoning or value' appealing to the Court of Queen's Bench for legal security against Shakespeare and three other persons 'for fear of death and mutilation of his limbs'. Quite a new light on our gentle Shakespeare! Evidently, like Hamlet, he had something in him dangerous. So, for all his natural sweetness of disposition, had Scott. Indeed one of his friends writing to another speaks of 'his irritable and most ungovernable mind'. But that was at the height of an emotional crisis, and in any case the language is far too strong. As a rule Scott's temper was well under control; it was only when his mind began to fail that he sometimes gave way to painful bursts of rage; normally he 'carried anger as a flint bears fire'.

The crisis to which I have alluded was the crisis, or rather the catastrophe, of his second and most serious love-affair. Scott's love-story falls into three chapters. At sixteen he fell in love for a little with a Kelso tradesman's daughter and wrote her five characteristic letters full of boyish affection and balladry. In early manhood he fell deeply in love with Williamina Belsches, the daughter of a Scottish baronet.

After years of not unhopeful wooing his suit was rejected, and though within a year his broken heart was 'handsomely pieced' by the lively Frenchwoman whom he married in 1797, the scar remained. But though he never forgot Miss Belsches, and even told Lady Abercorn that his affection for his wife came short of first love, he made her a faithful husband and wrote of her after her death as 'the creature that was so long the dearest on earth to me'. Of Shakespeare's love-story we know nothing for certain except that at eighteen and a half he married a woman of twenty-six, who bore him a daughter six months later. If we take the *Sonnets* literally we shall add that in London he succumbed for a time to an infatuation for a married woman and scorned himself for doing so. But that, however probable, is conjecture, and the rest is mere gossip. Neither the conjecture nor the gossip makes him out a pattern of marital fidelity. These different experiences are reflected in the difference of their attitudes to women. An unpublished sentence in his *Journal* gives the key to Scott's attitude: 'An intrigue of the heart carried me far: those of the senses had less effect on me.' This intrigue of the heart, his ideal passion for Miss Belsches, explains much; and convention also curbed his pen. There are no wantons, no pursuing women in his pages. His attitude to women of his own class is essentially romantic, as Shakespeare's attitude to all women is essentially natural.

Both Scott and Shakespeare belonged to the middle class; they were not aristocrats like Byron nor men of the people like Burns; and this fact had an important bearing on their outlook on life. Moreover both of them, though *bourgeois* born, claimed gentle blood, Scott on both sides, Shakespeare on his mother's at least. Naturally then they both attached considerable importance to rank and station, and to wealth as a means to these things. When Shakespeare had got a footing in London he obtained for his father the grant of a coat of arms for which the old man had applied unsuccessfully many years before. Presently he bought the best house in Stratford, which he repaired and let. By this time he was fairly prosperous: as one of the regular Chamberlain's Men

he drew his share of the takings; and when the Globe was built in 1599 he became a part-proprietor and was entitled to a fraction of the rent. He invested his savings in the Elizabethan equivalent for gilt-edged securities—houses, mortgages, and tithes—and was able to retire at forty-six to his mansion in Stratford. Though he could not hope to perpetuate his name, since his only son had died in childhood, he so far sought to found a family that he settled his real estate in entail on his elder daughter and her heirs male, failing them on her daughter and her heirs male, failing them on his younger daughter and her heirs male. In all this Scott followed a parallel course, but with a characteristic difference. His temperament was far more sanguine than Shakespeare's; while Shakespeare remained a simple burgess Scott was bent on becoming a laird and founding a county family. For this he plunged into trade as a short-cut to wealth. He had a sharp lesson in 1813, when his publishing venture brought him to the verge of bankruptcy; but it 'did no good upon him' when next year the success of *Waverley* opened a vein of gold that looked inexhaustible. He saw his dream within his grasp. He bought land, planted, built, and entertained like a prince, mortgaging his genius years in advance and spending money before it was earned; hence debts, bills, counter-bills, and catastrophe.

I have set down all, or almost all, that we learn about Shakespeare from others. If we wish to learn more we must turn to the plays themselves. And at this Lee's ghost starts up like a lion in our path, forbidding us to argue from the plays to the man. It is just here that the parallel with Scott comes to our aid. Most of us read Scott's novels before we read his life. As we read them a picture of the author formed itself in our minds, vague and sketchy enough at first, but growing more definite as we went on. Years later, it may be, we read Lockhart's *Life* with its clear and detailed picture of the man. And we found to our delight that the two pictures were substantially the same: the Scott of our fancy was the Scott of fact. Here then, it seems, we had argued from the books to the man with considerable success. Why should

we be less successful with Shakespeare? The process which has proved valid for Scott may be equally valid, though not equally verifiable, for Shakespeare.

This point is so vital to the rest of my argument that I will restate it from another angle. It was twelve years or more before Scott acknowledged the authorship of *Waverley*; but long before that the secret had been penetrated by most of his acquaintances and by acute readers like Adolphus who knew him only from his books. It had been obvious from the first that the Great Unknown was a Lowland Scot; *The Heart of Midlothian* revealed him as an Edinburgh man, and *Redgauntlet* as an old High School boy. As the series advanced it grew increasingly clear that he was a lawyer; was prodigiously read in history, antiquities, romance, and poetry, and could turn a ballad himself with any going; had a good deal of Latin and French, some Italian, a little German, but no Greek; that he was interested in soldiering, keen on field-sports, fond of dogs, and . . . But at this point the intelligent reader, if he knew Scott personally at all, clapped down the book and exclaimed, '*Aut Scotus aut diabolus*'. And what is more, and more to our purpose, the intelligent reader had formed a pretty clear and true idea not only of the author's nationality, profession, attainments, and tastes, but of his character and outlook on life; he saw him as a man of genius of course, but at bottom a normal, healthy man and a good citizen, neither cynical nor sentimental nor licentious, but fundamentally decent and chivalrous, with a firm belief in human goodness and the moral government of the world.

I propose to apply the same method to Shakespeare, beginning with a few points which can, as it happens, be verified:

1. The many references in the plays to field-sports, beasts, birds, and flowers show that their author was country-bred. As Walter Bagehot remarks apropos of the hunt in *Venus and Adonis*, we may not know much about the man who wrote that, but one thing we do know: the man who wrote that had been after a hare.

2. Such references are commonest in those plays which we know on other grounds to be very early or very late.



3. The only part of England outside London of which the author shows local knowledge is the country near Stratford.

4. His theatrical metaphors and mastery of stage resources prove him to have been a man of the theatre.

5. That he must have been an actor is shown by the pausation of his speeches, which is carefully spaced out to suit the natural give-and-take of breath—a point convincingly made by M. Feuillerat.

6. His use of words shows a good understanding of Latin but not of Greek.

All this agrees with what we know of the Man of Stratford who went back there on retiring, the actor who had small Latin ('small' by Jonson's standards) and less Greek. I pass on to some points that are not thus verifiable, and first to those in which Shakespeare can be compared or contrasted with Scott.

Shakespeare had a wonderful eye for movement:

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky.

Scott could not have written that—he had not Shakespeare's gift of phrase—but he could have seen what Shakespeare saw. Out coursing he would have spotted the hare as soon as Shakespeare, though he could not have described poor Wat so feelingly. His colour-sense does not strike one as less discriminating than Shakespeare's, and he was a master of light and shade. In visual gifts, then, they were not ill matched.

In hearing and smell, however, Scott's endowment was far inferior to Shakespeare's. He had a very poor ear for music; anything more elaborate than a simple tune was beyond him. To Shakespeare music and sweet poetry were sister and brother. His delight in music needs no illustration, and he knew its healing power also. Music wakes Lear from the sleep that winds up his untuned and jarring senses; it rouses Pericles from his tranced melancholy; at the end of the play-scene Hamlet calls for music to calm his nerves.

Scott's sense of smell too was very obtuse; stench that afflicted others would escape his notice; Shakespeare, on the other hand, owed some of his keenest delights to smell. To him, as to Milton and Shelley, scent and sound lie close together, so that he sometimes compares them:

That strain again! it had a dying fall:  
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet South,  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odour.

But this source of delight could also be a source of disgust. What he loathes most in the mob is its 'stinking breath'. Moral evil affects Hamlet like a foul smell—'things rank and gross', 'rank sweat', 'the nasty sty'. So too Claudius: 'O, my offence is rank, it smells to Heaven.' Strangest of all is the case of Lady Macbeth. What infects her mind and drives her to suicide is the smell of Duncan's blood on her hands: 'Here's the smell of the blood still: All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.'

Earlier in this paper I suggested, on rather slender evidence, that Shakespeare's constitution was more finely organized than Scott's. The facts that I have just cited support that view, and I will now lead further evidence. I mentioned that Scott was a hearty eater and drinker, and at times a heavy smoker. Now it is a remarkable fact that Shakespeare never once alludes to tobacco. His fellow dramatists mention it often, and Spenser goes out of his way in the *Faerie Queene* to pay a tribute to 'divine Tobacco'. But Shakespeare never refers to it. Yet how easy it would have been for him to bring it in, in some metaphor or simile, had he believed like Spenser in its virtues! Are we to infer that he disliked tobacco? A question not to be answered.

His attitude to drink, however, is clear enough, and very interesting it is. Up to 1600 wine is a good creature, a royal prince may desire small beer, and a drunk man is a comic sight. Then comes a sudden change. It begins in *Hamlet*. His uncle's drunken bouts disgust Hamlet; drunkenness soils the Danish name with swinish phrase. Cassio gets drunk, with tragic consequences; and we seem to hear Shake-

speare's own voice in his cry, 'O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!' There are two drinking-songs in the tragedies; and what songs! One is Iago's, luring Cassio to his fall. The other is sung aboard Pompey's galley, where the masters of the earth 'cup it till the world goes round', while murder lurks behind their chairs and the fate of the Empire trembles in the balance.<sup>1</sup>

This change in Shakespeare's attitude to drink coincides with a still stranger change in his attitude to love. In the early plays love is a natural thing, clean, even exalting: it ennobles Benedick and raises Juliet to heroic heights. But from 1600 onwards Shakespeare's mind seems to be tainted with disgust at the mere fact of sex. Again the taint appears first in *Hamlet*; it spreads and deepens in *Troilus*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Othello*, and is still perceptible in *Lear* and *Timon*, though in these last plays Shakespeare is preoccupied less with the lusts of the flesh than with the deadlier evils that spring from ingratitude and the lust for power.

Sir Edmund Chambers is disposed to think that about 1608, when he was at work on *Timon*, Shakespeare had a breakdown. It is not unlikely: Goethe said that it would have killed him to write *Lear*; it may well have half-killed Shakespeare. But I believe that Shakespeare had an earlier, if a less definite, breakdown, more or less coincident with those singular changes which I have just described. The reasons for this belief are slight but not negligible. In the first place, so far as we can make out, Shakespeare, who had been regularly producing two, and sometimes three, plays a year, wrote only one play in 1601, only one in 1602, and nothing at all in 1603. In the next place there is reason to think that from 1597 onwards he suffered at times from insomnia. Henry IV, Brutus, Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth are all afflicted with sleeplessness. The man who wrote Henry IV's

<sup>1</sup> In *Troilus* Shakespeare's disgust with the things of sense seems to extend to food. There are 44 references to or images from food in this play, by Miss Spurgeon's reckoning. More than half of them are distasteful. What 'distastes' him most is staleness, fustiness, rottenness (in eggs or fruit), and above all greasiness. All his physical distastes seem to be connected with his acute sense of smell.

soliloquy and Macbeth's apostrophe to Sleep must surely have known what it was to lie and wish for the day. This condition may have been brought on simply by overwork. For years after he joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men he seems to have been their only regular playwright. Moreover, in 1599 he reached his first climacteric; he was leaving his youth behind, and men aged early in those days. Once he was run down and depressed, bitter experiences of earlier years might surge up in his mind, as old wounds ache in damp weather. All that is rather conjectural, but of one thing I feel sure, that he was deeply affected by the fate of Essex, who died on the scaffold in February 1601. Many Englishmen were shocked by Essex's execution, and few had better reason to feel it than Shakespeare, who in 1599 had prophesied his triumphant return from Ireland, and whose old patron Southampton had been Essex's right-hand man and narrowly escaped his fate. There was much hatred of the old Queen in those years, and Shakespeare seems to have shared it: at all events, when his brother poets laid wreaths of verse on her tomb, Shakespeare laid none, and Chettle expostulated with him for his silence.

It remains to compare Scott and Shakespeare in respect of their attitude to life, and in particular to politics. Scott was a Tory born and bred, not a converted democrat like Wordsworth but a Tory by sentiment and tradition. A famous passage in *The Chronicles of the Canongate* shows that he was not blind to some of the faults of the old régime or to one at least of the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. But his general attitude was always the same: he had hated the French Revolution in his youth, and in his old age the Reform Bill seemed to him the beginning of the end. He had no faith in democracy: his ideal was a kind of patriarchy such as he created around him at Abbotsford, a social pyramid cemented together by personal loyalty. But while he thought the people unfit to govern, his attitude to the individual working man was beyond praise companionable and brotherly. He spoke to all men, it was said, 'as if they were his blood-relations'. Above all things he was a kindly Scot. Deeper than his love

of rank and station was his sense of kindred. He felt in his blood that all Scotsmen, if not all men, were brothers; yes, and in the last resort equals. In the face of death the old beggar is a better man than the baronet. Hence he not only loved his poor neighbours but understood them. There is no scene in his pages so moving, or so understanding, as the funeral of Steenie Mucklebackit, no fine lady to compare with Jeanie Deans. Shakespeare's attitude was not dissimilar. The memory of the Wars of the Roses still lingered in the Stratford of his boyhood. What he feared for England was a return of that anarchy, and the only bulwark against anarchy was order, the due subordination of class to class. Ulysses hammers that in with no fewer than eleven synonyms:

The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre  
Observe degree, priority and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office and custom, in all line of order.

Take order away, and, hark, what discord follows—Caliban bellowing 'Freedom! freedom!' Being Shakespeare, he had glimpses of the other side: the soldiers in *Henry V* have something to say for themselves, and the citizens in *Coriolanus* have the best of the argument when to Coriolanus's arrogant 'Your price o' the consulship?' they answer, 'The price is, to ask it kindly'. But these glimpses did not affect his general attitude: the people *en masse* is a mob, a flock of sheep. He had no such scorn for simple men individually, but recognized and admired their plain virtues. The evidence is scanty, since in these courtly plays the common people appear mostly as menials or clowns. Still there are Adam and Corin in *As You Like It*, and in *Lear* and *Timon* those striking instances to which Bradley called attention. The darkness of *Lear* is lightened not only by the noble figures of Cordelia and Kent but by the courage of the humble serving-man who draws on his master to stop the blinding of Gloster, by the humanity of his fellow servants, and by the unselfish devotion of the old tenant who leads the blinded Gloster on his way and promises to bring his 'best 'parel' for Mad Tom, 'come on't what will'. And in *Timon*, where only the servants remain

loyal, there is this arresting utterance: 'But in the plain and simple kind of people, the act of saying is quite out of use': i.e. only plain simple people now keep their promises. Yes; Shakespeare could respect Hodge and his honest kersey virtues; but could he have made a companion of him, as the robust Scott, with his clan-feeling and Presbyterian upbringing, made of Tom Purdie?

Scott and Shakespeare were both men of the world in more senses than one. If poets were to be divided, as I have heard them divided, into worldly and other-worldly, Shakespeare and Scott would undoubtedly fall into the former category. Not that they were irreligious. Scott, we know, was a believer, though his tumultuous life knew little of that peace in believing which Lockhart found so sublime in Wilberforce's. And Shakespeare, whatever we may think of the tradition that he died a Papist, was certainly no scoffer; he shows a tenderness for the old religion and never refers to Christ but with reverence. But it was this life, not the next, that filled their pens, this world, this human scene that absorbed them. They did not set up to be preachers or prophets. But though they professed no moral purpose, their writings have had a profound moral effect. And that effect, up to a point, has in both cases been substantially the same. There are higher and deeper things in Shakespeare than Scott could compass, an acuter sensibility, a wider and more speculative vision; but over the range of experience which they had in common they agree substantially with one another, and with the massive good sense and good feeling of the race to which they both belonged.

One word more. I have said that Shakespeare and Scott were both men of the world in more senses than one. And yet there is a sense, perhaps the deepest of all, in which they were not men of the world: at heart they both were dreamers. In childhood, and even after childhood, Scott found his favourite amusement in creating imaginary characters and setting them in action. Much in his novels, he tells us, came out of this castle-building; and near the end of his days he declared that his life had been a kind of dream. Unless we

bear this in mind we shall never wholly understand Scott, 'this extraordinary man', as Cadell called him, apparently immersed in the things of this world, yet withdrawing at will into an inner world of dream. It was the same with Shakespeare, a successful playwright and man of business, with emotions and passions like the rest of us, but first and last a poet 'of imagination all compact', and that imagination, however influenced in its working by public taste or private feeling, always driving on, as it were by its own motion, to body forth the forms of things unknown, so that we might almost say not that he possessed it but that it possessed him.

J. C. SMITH.

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